

S E R M O N S

O N

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

B Y

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S E R M O N X I.

GENESIS xxii. 14.

*As it is said to this day, In the mount
of the Lord it shall be seen.*

THIS seems to have been a common proverb, in use from the time of Abraham to that when Moses wrote this history, not much less than three hundred years. Now, the words in the original, which are translated, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*, may also be as well rendered, *In the mount, the Lord shall be seen*. But which way soever we render it,

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whether

whether we take the word Jehovah, or Lord, in the nominative or in the genitive case, for it is alike capable of being taken either way, the sense will be the same. If we render the words with our translators, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*; the meaning is, "it shall then and there be seen what God will do, and what provision he will make." And if we render the words, *In the mount the Lord will be seen*, the meaning is, "that God will then and there appear to make such provision, and afford such relief, as to his wisdom shall seem best." This proverbial form of speech, as is conceived, they made use of, when at any time they were in any extraordinary strait or perplexity; then they would in this form of speech, alluding to what God had

done for Abraham in this mount, comfort, and encourage themselves, saying, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*, or, *In the mount the Lord will be seen*. In the mount, that is, when our extremities come to be at the highest, and our straits are greatest. Now, this proverbial speech, though it alludes to God's dealing with Abraham in the mount, and was, upon that occasion, first adopted; yet it is not wholly grounded thereon, but also on the ordinary course of God's providence, which the men of that generation had observed to be very agreeable to his dealings with Abraham. As he interfered for Abraham's relief in the mount, just as he was stretching out his hand to slay his son, and prevented him, substituting another sacrifice in the room of Isaac;

so ordinarily he deals with his people; he comes to their succour in their greatest extremities. This, I say, they having observed to be the ordinary course of God's providence, they took occasion to express what they had observed in this form of words, alluding to what God had done for Abraham in the mount, saying, *In the mount the Lord will be seen.* For, unless they had observed this to be the ordinary course of God's providence, this single instance of God's dealing with Abraham had not been sufficient for the ground of such a proverbial speech.

The words being thus explained, afford us this observation, That God usually interposes to succour and relieve his people in their greatest extremities.

I shall

I shall give a few instances hereof out of scripture; then add some reasons of this dispensation; and lastly, apply it to ourselves

There is not indeed a more remarkable instance than this, of Abraham's being relieved in the mount. Other instances are, that of God's sending Moses and Aaron to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, when after many years hard bondage under the Egyptian yoke, their miseries, and the oppression and cruelty of their enemies, were now at the highest; when all their male children were commanded to be drowned; when unmerciful task-masters were set over them, who should exact from them the whole tale of brick which they had been wont to make, and cruelly

beat them if it fell short, though materials to make it were withdrawn from them. God could have delivered them much sooner, and have prevented this extremity; but it seemed good to his wisdom to defer their deliverance, till their sufferings were at the highest, and then to afford them succour.

So again afterwards, when being dismissed out of Egypt, the army of the Egyptians pursuing them was close behind them, the Red Sea before them, and the mountains on both sides of them. In this their great strait God appeared for them, miraculously dividing the sea to make a passage for his people, and destroying their enemies who followed them, by the return of the waters upon them.

them. God could as easily have destroyed the Egyptians, and rescued his people before they had been brought into that strait. But the time of their utmost extremity, was God's opportunity to shew mercy, and therefore, till that time, he thought fit to delay his succour.

Another instance hereof we have in the first book of Samuel, where we read how great a strait David was in, and how seasonably God relieved him, in that very juncture of time, when, unless relief had come, he had certainly fallen into the hands of his blood-thirsty enemies. *Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and*

his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. And there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land: wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistine. God, who most wisely disposes and orders the circumstances of all things, caused this messenger to be sent to recall Saul from pursuing David, just as he was now ready to seize on him, and not till then, though the Philistines might have invaded the land sooner, and this messenger might have come to call back Saul before David had been in that strait. But that season of David's extremity was the hour unto which God had reserved that relief which he intended he should have.

I shall

I shall pass over the instance of the widow of Zarephath, and add but one instance more, which shall be that which we have in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, concerning St. Peter's deliverance.—

“ Herod the king, having slain James with the sword, and perceiving that the Jews were pleased with it, to gratify them further he apprehends Peter also, and casts him into prison, where he was kept for some time. From the time of his imprisonment, prayer was made without ceasing by the church unto God for him; but still he was kept in prison; and nothing was done for him in answer to all these prayers, till the very night before Herod intended to have brought him forth to the people, and to have put him to death. In that very night, and not till then, was he set at liberty, and

and released by an angel," the miraculous circumstances of which his deliverance, are at large described in that chapter.

I might add many more instances of God's interposing to succour and relieve his servants in their greatest extremities, being then especially, as David says, *a very present help to them in their trouble.*

But I proceed now, in the second place, to give the reasons of this dispensation, at least to mention some of them. I shall place them in two ranks, that I may avoid confusion; first, shewing why God defers his relief so long, till a time of greatest extremity; and secondly, why he then at length affords relief.

Concerning

Concerning the former of these, God usually defers the relief of his people, so long in their troubles.

1st. That he may thereby exercise their faith and patience. There is but small trial of faith, little exercise thereof in those afflictions that are quickly over, and never come to any extremity ; and as little trial or exercise of patience is there in such cases. A little faith and a little patience may hold out, where trials are neither long continued, nor extreme. Wherefore God, who is infinitely wise, knowing how needful and beneficial it is to his servants that their faith should be exercised thoroughly, and their patience have its perfect work, often draws out their afflictions to a very great length, before he sends relief.

That

That God, by the trials and temptations of his people, intends the exercise and improvement of these two graces, we may see in the first chapter of St. James's epistle. And he who understands the true worth and value of these graces, will not think the increase and improvement of them to be dearly bought, though the afflictions which in order thereunto he undergoes be long and sharp, even to extremity.

Another reason why God defers the relief of his people so long, is, that he may carry them on in prayer, that they may offer up their humble petitions to him, in order to their deliverance, still more and more fervently, and incessantly, as their trials rise higher and higher. This he does
that,

that, after so many prayers, they may have more full and comfortable returns at last, as it was in the case of those christians who prayed so much and so long for Peter's relief. In answer to so many prayers, he had at length his release immediately from heaven, in an extraordinary and miraculous manner.

3dly. God is pleased to defer the relief of his people so long, that they may in the mean time be more humbled for their sins, and more thoroughly sensible of their utter unworthiness of that mercy for which they are waiting upon him. To get the heart to be truly humbled is no easy matter; this is a work that goes slowly on, as every man's own experience will tell him, when he sets about it. It is
not

not the employment of a day or two, it must be done by little and little, and therefore time is necessary for bringing it to perfection. Also, because easy and gentle applications make little or no impressions upon us, it is requisite that something of an extraordinary nature be made use of, that our hearts may thereby yield and relent.

Another reason why God defers the relief of his people so long, why he doth not help them sooner, and prevent their extremities, is, that he may take off their hearts from all their dependance on any other assistance; that when things are come to such extremity, that now they see there is none else in all the world who can relieve them but God, they may no longer

longer look to the hills and mountains for succour, but their expectation may be from God, and from him only, as the Psalmist speaks. So carnal are we, that we rather chuse to rely on any thing else than God, as long as we have any thing else upon which to rest. But in our extremity, all other supports being removed, we are necessitated to betake ourselves to God, and expect relief from him, who alone is able to afford it us.

This I had to offer concerning the reasons why God defers the relief of his people so long, and doth not prevent their extremities, by advancing sooner to their succour. But,

2dly. Why doth God then afford them relief? Why doth he do it in
their

their greatest extremities? He makes choice of that time, no doubt, to relieve them, because it is the fittest season. And the fittest season it is in many respects, as may in part be gathered from what has been said.

1st. In their greatest extremities they are most humble. Their afflictions bring their sins to remembrance, and make them judge and loath themselves for them; and this they do most effectually, most sincerely, and heartily, when their straits are greatest. Now men are most fit for deliverance when they are most humble. Mercy never comes more seasonably, it never finds men in a more suitable disposition to entertain it, than when they are abhorring themselves for all their evil ways. This frame of the heart God chiefly hath respect unto when he comes

comes to shew mercy; *He will save the humble person. He hears the desire of the humble, and forgetteth not the way of the humble. Humble therefore yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

2dly. In their greatest extremity they pray most fervently. In lesser afflictions they pray, but in their extremities they cry unto God for help, as the Israelites did when they were at the Red Sea, and the Egyptians were close behind them. Extremity of affliction puts an accent upon the prayers of God's people, and makes them not only cry, but cry aloud for succour, as David in his distress was wont to do. Now though cold and drowsy prayers do not speed so well, yet there is a wonderful efficacy in fer-

vent prayers to prevail with God for relief. Again, he relieves them in their greatest extremities, that he might not cast a damp upon their faith, and discourage their prayers. For if God should then fail them, they would say their faith was vain, and that their prayers were insignificant and fruitless. They would be tempted to conclude, that there is no advantage or benefit in seeking God, in looking up to him, and depending on him; they would be tempted to think it a very indifferent thing whether they pray or no, and whether they have recourse to God in their distresses, or to other assistance; and that they might hope to speed as well in the total neglect, as in the most conscientious performance of their duty.

God

God relieves his people in their greatest extremities, that he might not give their enemies an occasion of triumphing in their misery. For if God should fail his people in such extremities, then their enemies would insult over them, and reproach them, saying, *Where is now your God?* What is become now of all your prayers, of all your confidence in God's help, of your reliance on him, and expectation of relief from him? This proud and reproachful triumph is that which God's people have ever prayed against, frequent instances whereof we have in the book of Psalms. Nay, God himself declares, that he mercifully forbears to use that severity against them which their sins deserve, lest their and his enemies should thence take an occasion of exulting. Thus we read in the Book of Deuteronomy, *I said I*

would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, and lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this. When he saith, *Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy,* he speaks after the manner of men; but his meaning is, that though his people had given him sufficient cause to deal most severely with them, yet he was pleased to hold his hand, and to use much greater moderation in correcting them (than otherwise he would have done) to prevent the exultation of their enemies.

Having thus given you the reasons, at least some of them, why God usually relieves his people in their
greatest

greatest extremities, and not till then, I shall now apply what has been said. Doth God succour his people in their greatest extremities? Then we may hence be encouraged to trust in him to the uttermost, and not to cast away our confidence, or yield to despair in our several trials. Let us be contented to wait till God's appointed time, for relieving us in our respective troubles and afflictions, be fully come: and though he make us expect long, yet let us not give way either to discouragement or impatience. Though, instead of that desirable issue of our troubles, for which we earnestly long, we should meet with new difficulties and perplexities every day, yet let not all this put us out of heart, or make us weary of waiting. The more dark and cloudy the face of things is, the

sooner will they be at the worst ; then mostly is God's opportunity to step in and relieve us.

Doth God come in to succour and relieve his people in their greatest extremities ? Then be persuaded to make God your friend ; labour to get an interest in his favour, who can help you when none else can, and who will not fail to succour you, when your necessity shall be such as most calls for his help.

Having gotten an interest in his favour, walk humbly before him ; have respect unto all his commandments ; allow not yourself in any sin ; do nothing that may provoke him to displeasure against you ; nothing that may hide his face from you, or cause
any

any distance or alienation between him and you.

In order to which commit yourselves unto God, and resign yourselves up to his disposal, for this we are commanded to do. *Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, as unto a faithful Creator.* In so doing we need not question but that he will undertake for us, and secure us in such ways, and so far as to his wisdom shall seem best; which is supposed, and necessarily implied, when he bids us commit ourselves unto him. For, what man would say to his friend or neighbour, "Commit yourself to me," unless he meant to take care of him, and of his concerns? If he intended no such matter, to bid

hath placed us. *Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well doing, saith St. Paul. So also the Psalmist, Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Whatever calamities may be hanging over our heads, in what way of Providence soever God may be acting towards us, it is good and safe to be found in God's way, and duly employed in that work which he hath assigned us: *Blessed is the servant whom his master when he cometh shall find so doing.*

S E R M O N XII.

JOHN vii. 17.

*If any man will do his will, he shall
- know of the doctrine, whether it be
of God, or whether I speak of my-
self.*

THE true reason why many, even
in those places where christianity
is preached, cannot be prevailed upon
to believe the gospel, and become true
christians, will, I believe, upon enqui-
ry, be found not to arise from any real
objections they may have formed
against the truth of the christian re-
velation,

velation, but from their own perverse will and evil dispositions. For they know, from their natural notions of good and evil, that any revelation coming from a pure and holy God, must cross their evil designs and affections, and consequently they are averse to enquire after divine truths, in which, as long as they lead the lives they do, they can promise themselves but little comfort or satisfaction : so that to enable men fairly to examine the truth of a divine revelation, and to acknowledge it upon full and sufficient evidence, there must be such a disposition of mind to receive whatever may appear to be the will of God, as may enable them to be impartial judges. This, our Saviour requires of us, when he says in the text, *If any man will do the will*
of

of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself; his meaning plainly is, whoever is sincerely resolved to do whatsoever he already knoweth to be God's will and pleasure, antecedently to those lights and advantages which are afforded in the gospel, this man shall assuredly receive and embrace Christ's doctrines and religion, whensoever they are fairly propounded to him; or, in other words, virtue and morality are the proper foundations of belief in the gospel, and the only sure preparations for its reception.

If this be true, then there is a strong presumption (and I think undoubted) that vice and immorality, though not always, yet in many cases, actually obstruct our believing the doctrines

doctrines of Christ, and always have a tendency to obstruct our belief. *He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine,* saith our Lord, *whether it be of God.* The will here to be done, is that law of God which is written on men's hearts, and all those natural notices of religious and moral duties, all that light and knowledge, however attained, which is previous and antecedent to the gospel revelation.

Indeed, the grounds of all religion lie in those notions which men universally have concerning good and evil, from the moral principles implanted in their nature. So long as a man retains a sense of them, so as to be touched or affected by them, so long he is a capable subject of religion; but if you suppose him either to have lost

this sense of good and evil, or to have so impaired it by wicked living, that he no longer perceives the force of moral obligation, he becomes thenceforward not only unfit for the practice of religion, but unqualified to make any fair or right judgment about it, or to receive those convictions of its truth which all other men, in whom this sense remains vigorous and entire, are thereby prepared and ready to receive.

At the same time it is remarkable of this sense, or faculty, or by what other name soever we call it, that of all the powers of the mind, it is the most liable to be hurt and rendered useless. Nothing, indeed, but an obstinate course of wickedness can do a man this mischief, but this may do it effectually.

effectually. This may so corrupt and adulterate that genuine taste of goodness, may so darken the eye of his mind, by which alone he can truly perceive the force of moral obligation, that he shall be no longer able to make any certain or proper judgment in morality, though he may preserve his reason and judgment upon other subjects (the understanding of which depends not upon this faculty) still clear and entire.

Whenever therefore we perceive men to outlive their sense of that knowledge of God and religion, and duty, which they have from the light of nature, and then call the principles and evidences of revealed religion into question, we ought by no means to conclude from thence, that the principles

etiples of religion are really questionable, or that there is not as good evidence for them as for other acknowledged truths; but we should rather argue, that these men have some of their natural endowments (which it was not in their power to destroy by their sensuality) left them entire; and that as to all those subjects about which those powers and faculties are exercised, they judge and act like other men; but that faculty, or sense, whereby they should discover the force of moral obligations, and consequently perceive the evidences for religion in their full strength, in order to make a true and equal judgment of it, is either lost, or wretchedly disabled; that the eye of their understanding is in this respect darkened and blinded by the influence of sensuality.

In the same degree or proportion, therefore, that this moral sense is diminished or impaired in any man by his wickedness and sensuality, in the same degree and proportion he is rendered a less competent judge of those valuable truths, of which we are treating.

In short, virtue and morality will always be lost, in proportion as the appetites have dominion. Thus, for instance, the sensual man who labours in the gratification of his own passions, and proposes no other end than to serve himself, nay, the worst part of himself, in all his actions; this man overlooks the duties he owes to his fellow creatures, and casts behind him not only all concern for the more peculiar doctrines of the gospel, but all

9 regards

regard for those of natural conscience, such as justice, equity, and compassion. Thus, the covetous man is apt to defraud all he deals with, to betray the trust committed to him, and to make a prey of the widow and the orphan unhappily placed under his protection. Thus, also, the ambitious man fills the world with violence and blood; sacrificing his country, friends, and religion to his insatiable desire of power. Thus, the libertine breaks the bonds of friendship and hospitality, and entails dishonour and reproach upon those who love him best; he lies in wait to betray unguarded innocence, and is content for the sake of gratifying his unlawful passion, to bring shame, remorse of conscience, and all the evils of life upon a fellow creature. All these sin in this man-

ner without the least compunction of heart, so effectually do vice and immorality extinguish the force of natural conscience, leaving a man not even reason and religion enough to repent of his iniquities. The mind by degrees loses all relish for serious thoughts and contemplation; it contracts an hardness by long acquaintance with sin, and is armed with a kind of indifference to all religion, to every duty it owes to God or man.

But though men, who are immersed in sensuality, are unapt for serious reflections, and indisposed to receive the great truths contained in revealed religion, yet, how shall we account for the infidelity of those, who are observed to be grave and thinking men? Their infidelity must be charged upon

upon some other principle than that which we have hitherto supposed. Now, this principle seems to be a strong attachment to secular and sordid interests ; all those mean, self-regards, which are the offspring either of covetousness or pride ; which, though they may not directly affect the understanding, yet pervert and corrupt the will to a great degree, and give it a strong bias against the reception of the truths of the gospel.

As to one branch of this head, viz. covetousness, we cannot, indeed, so closely argue from the remarks made in scripture upon the unbelieving Jews with respect to it, because the cases there put of parting with all to follow Christ, are not cases of common trial and temptation : I shall therefore omit

it, though much might be said of the prejudices, which the love of money, and of this world's good will create against the admission of a doctrine, so contrary to all secular interests, as is that of the christian religion. But the other branch, pride, in all its forms, and with all its train, is as proper a topic to argue from, when we would account for infidelity at this day, as ever it was in former ages.

Let it therefore be considered, that our Saviour in my text, directs it as the surest and most proper expedient for attaining to faith in the gospel, that a man should study to approve himself to God, by doing his will and pleasure as far as it is known to him. To do his will is to seek his praise; and it will be rewarded with a further
and

and clearer knowledge of himself and of his laws. But, if this be true, then is the inference good, that whosoever seeks the praise of men, more than the praise of God, takes the ready way to cause obstructions in his belief of the gospel; nay, he may so far indulge his ambition of pleasing men, as to forfeit his capacity of becoming a servant or disciple of Christ. This is one of the reasons which our Blessed Lord himself gives, why some of his hearers could not believe on him, because *they sought honour one of another, and sought not the honour that cometh of God.*

This was the known fault of the Pharisees, who both took a great pride in thinking differently from the rest of their nation, and despising all others

who would not assent to their tenets, and also a great deal of pains to gain over Profelytes to their opinions. The effects of which proved very fatal to them, and must necessarily be so to all who are of the same temper; for, it is the hardest thing in the world, to wean a man from any notions which he hath thus conceitedly taken up, and superciliously propagated; vanity being of all human passions, one of the most positive and inflexible.

Now, if the temper and passions of men are the same they always were, what are we to expect, but that, in these days also, mere pride, affectation of singularity, and desire to have their persons held in admiration, will cause some men to overcome those evidences for the truth of religion, which
had

had they but known themselves, or been in any degree humble and docile, would have overcome them? Consequently, how can we wonder, if men of this temper do very boldly oppose themselves against the positive duties of revealed religion.

But here, perhaps, you may ask, how can conceit so affect a man in his way of thinking, as to render him incapable of judging of those evidences for the truth of the gospel, the force of which most other men can easily enough perceive?

I answer, that if we take our notions from experience (and unless we do so, we shall certainly take wrong measures of mankind) we shall find that men's actual believing, or not believing

believing a thing, does not more depend upon the credibility or incredibility of the thing itself proposed to them, than upon the temper and disposition of mind wherewith they receive the representations of it, which are made to them. We are forward to believe what we desire, and very backward and slow in yielding our assent to any thing that crosses our inclinations. As a man in the heat of his rage and fury will not hear reason, especially from him who hath provoked him, so that man who is buoyed up by his own conceit and the suffrage of others, or hurried with a spirit of contradiction, is proof against demonstration itself, where it strikes at, and overturns his own beloved conclusions; especially if such confutation happens to come from those

those whom he has already learned to despise, or who he imagines look upon him and treat him with scorn.

If, therefore, the evidences of the christian religion, however generally acknowledged and embraced, happen to be disputed and opposed by men of this untoward disposition, it is no more than we may expect; for vanity supplies the place of all other prejudices with respect to perverting the will, and thereby interrupting the understanding, and preventing a sound judgment. We cannot, indeed, certainly judge of men's private thoughts and dispositions; nor can we determine in any particular person, what may be the reigning and principal motive to infidelity, or the occasion of his not seeing things as others

others do, but we may make general conclusions from what has been said. As we are very sure that the causes assigned by our Lord for infidelity hold in reason to this day, so we need make no doubt but that they hold also in fact, and the rather because it is hard to discover any other reason for the thing in question.

Certainly it is of no little consequence that we are able to give some account of this matter. It takes off an objection, which, could it not be answered, would go a great way with some men towards the unsettling them in the very principles of religion; for, since all those who have gone through a course of human learning, are so generally agreed in the principles of the sciences; and all who
have

have had a liberal education in the maxims of good breeding and rules of civility; and all who have seen the world, and transacted business in it, differ not much in the way of managing the common affairs of human life; it should seem very strange that they, who judge so like in most things, should look with such different eyes upon religion, which, of all others, is the greatest and dearest interest they have in the world, especially as to the most important point, whether that be true or false, upon which those invaluable interests do absolutely depend.

But now, when this matter is rightly explained and understood, it appears, that for that very reason, because religion doth so nearly touch men's interests, because it is of so prodigious

a con-

cluded

a concern to them, either to embrace it heartily, and live up to it, or else, if possible, to convince themselves that they are under no such obligations (which is the only way either to make their own minds and lives tolerably easy, or to furnish them with any excuse for their manner of living) therefore, of all other truths, the truth of that will be most called in question.

If we consider farther, how it clashes with their secular schemes and designs, how directly it thwarts their passions and irregular appetites, and what unwelcome restraints it lays upon their pursuit of what they think their worldly happiness, we must necessarily perceive what strong temptations they are under to get rid, if possible, of its yoke.

Lastly.

Lastly. If some truths then be more generally owned, and agreed upon than others, it is not always purely because those truths carry greater evidence in them than the others, which are sometimes disputed or denied, but because men are generally better disposed for judging of, and giving assent to, truths of one kind, rather than those of another. If every man, for instance (as has been often and well observed) was as much concerned in present interest, or as much tempted through pride, or lust, not to believe a mathematical demonstration, as some men are concerned and tempted not to believe the christian religion, there would perhaps be found as many at least, who would deny the evidence of science, as there are who reject the evidences of the gospel. Could
a man

a man ease an aching heart, or stifle an ill-boding reflection; could he hope to free himself from the stings of conscience, and the apprehensions of the terrors of the next world; or could every ambitious man feed his own fancy, and gratify his thirst of popular applause, by disputing the most evident conclusions in geometry; I doubt not but we might expect to meet with some smart efforts of human wit and reason, towards destroying all mathematical certainty. Nay, if men's vices did as much debauch their reason and understanding in matters of civil life, as in things pertaining to religion and conscience, we should perhaps be as little agreed in our behaviour one towards another, or in the ordinary management of our worldly affairs, as we are about the most important articles of religion.

I shall

I shall conclude this discourse with two inferences.

1st. We may infer, from what has been said, the great reason of infidelity in the world. If any man be an infidel, it is not because there is not sufficient evidence that christianity is from God, but because men's interests and passions make them partial and incompetent judges of matters of religion. The evidence of the christian religion is such as recommends it to every man's reason and conscience; so that (as St. Paul argues) *If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,*

When therefore we see men living as without God in the world, neglecting every duty enjoined them in the gospel, not only looking upon the more abstruse parts of it as things of no consequence, but can scarce be prevailed upon to pay any regard to the plainer precepts of religion, such as paying their duty to God in his house, keeping the sabbath holy, or doing to others as they would be done unto; we may be confident that their lives, if we knew all, are flagrantly defective; because, if they lived up to the principles of natural religion, they would be easily convinced that christianity, which is so consonant thereto, is from God,

2dly. What has been said is a great argument for obedience and holiness of life. Do we desire not to be mistaken

taken about the mind of God? Let us heartily endeavour to do his will. If we would not be seduced by the error of the wicked, let us take heed of their vicious practices. The best way, certainly, to preserve a right judgment in matters of religion, is to take great care of a good life. The principles of natural religion are born with us, and imprinted upon our minds, so that no man can be ignorant of them, nor need to be mistaken about them; and as for those revelations which God hath made of himself to the world, he hath been pleased to accompany them with so much evidence, that an honest and sincere mind may easily discern them; for our Saviour hath assured us, *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

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S E R M O N XIII.

MATTHEW xxii. 45.

If David call him Lord, how is he his son?

IN the twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew is the history of our Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem, attended with the loyal homage, and loud hosannas, of a vast multitude of such as had heard his preaching, and seen his miracles.

When, therefore, the chief of the Jews saw him thus saluted as the son

of David, that is, as the promised Messiah, in the very metropolis of their nation, they came to him the next morning, as he was teaching in the temple, and demanded of him by what authority he assumed that character? They who had the evidence of John's preaching, whom the generality of them looked upon as a true prophet; who had, besides, opportunity enough of being informed of the miracles which Christ himself had wrought, needed, he thought, no answer to such a query. He therefore reproves their infidelity in three parables, that of the two sons, that of the rebellious husbandmen, and that of the marriage of the king's son.

Being further provoked at this, instead of reclaimed, they send to him
their

their emissaries of all kinds to endeavour to catch him in his words, that they might pick an accusation out of some of his answers. The first were the two opposite sects, as to civil obedience, the Pharisees and the Herodians. The Pharisees thought it unlawful to pay the Roman tribute, because it was a tenth, and the tenth by their law was due to God. The Herodians paid their court to the Romans, and cared not for religion; so that should our Lord allow the lawfulness of tribute, the populace, who were led by the Pharisees, would hate him, and should he deny it to be lawful, the Roman governour would lay hold of him. But his answer disappointed them both. After these he silences the Sadducees, a sect of free-thinkers, who denied the doctrine of a

resurrection, the being of any spiritual substance, or any separate, invisible, or future state.

Then come the Pharisees in a body, and one of them questioned him; so the expression is in St. Matthew, which means no more than one among the company, or one whom they had brought to dispute with Jesus; nay, St. Mark calls him a Scribe, and St. Luke says, there were more Scribes than one present. Now, the Scribes, or interpreters of the law of Moses, were a different sect to the Pharisees in religious respects. The Pharisees held a multitude of traditions, or an unwritten oral rule of faith, to be of equal or greater authority than the holy scriptures. But the Lawyers, or Scribes, (whom Josephus calls the Karaites) stuck

stuck to the written law, and rejected all other traditions. So far they were right, but then they made such grievous glosses and comments upon the scriptures, as neither they nor their disciples were able to keep.

One of these Scribes, learned in the law of Moses, the Pharisees thought would be able to confound our Saviour with his hard questions; but he received so full and satisfactory an answer to his first question, that every one forbore to ask him any more.

Jesus then himself proposes to these great casuists, what their opinion was concerning the extraction of their Messiah, of whose office and dignity they were so much concerned to be well instructed. To this they immediately

diately answer, as it was evidently foretold of him, that he was to descend from the family and stock of David. This was indeed literally true of Christ as to the flesh, but they, who had set their hearts only on the temporal grandeur of the Messiah, little dreamt of his divine extraction, and knew not how to distinguish between that and his descent from David; he therefore subjoins this further query, to which these captious sophists were not able to reply.

You will allow, that David in the 110th Psalm speaks of the Messiah, for so your own commentators have interpreted this psalm. Now it is plain he there speaks of Christ as his superior, and that in an infinite degree; he styles him (Adoni) his Lord;
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yet he introduces him as spoken to by God, in the same form as we distinguish two persons, (Jehovah) *The Lord said unto (Adoni) my Lord, sit thou on my right hand.*

If David therefore call Christ his Lord, how is he his Son? The Son of David and the Lord of David? His superior and inferior too? If he be the Son of David, answer me, how is he Lord of David? If the Lord of David, how is he inferior to him, and descended from him?

This question the evangelist tells us these learned men of the Mosaic law were not able to resolve. They were so utterly silenced and confounded, that from hence they were discouraged from endeavouring to puzzle him with questions,

tions, whom they found so much superior to themselves in the knowledge of their own scriptures.

But, thanks be to God, our Lord himself and his apostles have taught us to answer this question, which perplexed these jewish doctors. The faith which we christians profess, resolves the Psalmist's meaning, and teaches us to say,

First. How Christ is the Son of David.

Secondly. How he is David's Lord.

First. How he is the Son of David: for so several passages of the Old Testament foretold that Christ should be.

In

In the Second Book of Samuel we have the Lord's promise to David, *Thy house, and thy kingdom, and thy throne shall be established for ever before me.* The same promise is repeated in the eighty-ninth psalm, *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant; thy seed shall I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.* Again, *David's seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Now, that this promise can only be fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ, is evident, because the temporal reign of the posterity of David has long since failed. There has been no government in Israel since our Saviour was upon earth, and the government of the jewish nation had been long before that period, even from the time of

of the Maccabees, in the Asmonæan family, who were priests, and of the tribe of Levi; and after that under Herod, who was but half a Jew, and not related to the royal line; nay, I believe at this time, it will be difficult for any Jew to prove his pedigree from David's stock.

Since then the kingdom of David's posterity has long ago ceased as to any temporal royalty, the aforesaid promises of perpetuity to David's posterity can only be verified in the kingdom of Christ, which was to continue to the end of the world.

The prophet Daniel, in the vision of the four beasts, is told that those four beasts signify four kingdoms, viz. the four great monarchies of the world,
the

the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, all which monarchies should be destroyed. But he saw one like unto the Son of Man, that he came with the clouds of heaven, that is, with the highest dignity and supremacy; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; and whereas those other great monarchies should all have their period, his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The same is said in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. *In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall*
not

not be left to other people, but it shall break to pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever,

This, in both places, is evidently spoken of the Messiah, *the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands*; and in the other text, *one like unto the Son of Man*. The prophet Micah also speaking of the restoration of Israel, says, *I, the Lord, shall reign over them in mount Zion, from henceforth and for ever.*

A perpetuity of dominion being therefore promised to David's posterity, and the same promise in the same terms made to the Messiah; and there being now no dominion in David's posterity, except the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is plain that these prophecies

prophecies meant that Christ should be of David's posterity.

And thus the angel interprets these prophecies in his salutation to the virgin, in St. Luke, *Thou shalt bring forth a son. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Isaiah also foretells that Christ should come of the family of David. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.* Jeremiah also testifies the same, *The days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous*

branch, and a king shall reign and prosper; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. In both these places the context is only true concerning the Messiah, especially because no other king of Judah, no other branch of David, could be properly stiled Jehovah our Righteousness.

Thus it is evident from the scriptures that Christ was to be the Son of David, and the answer of these Jews was true as to this point. That this also was the current opinion among them, appears from their objecting, that Jesus came out of Galilee. *Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was?* The chief priests and scribes told Herod the

the same, and alledged this passage for it, *Thou Betlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.*

Let us now consider, how it appears that Jesus, whom we believe to be Christ, did answer these predictions in being descended from David. Though we had no other proof of this, but barely the affirmation of the authors of the New Testament, this were sufficient, since it is plain those authors were inspired, because they confirmed what they taught by various miracles, and therefore cannot deceive us in what they teach or affirm. Now, in the

epistle to the Romans, we are told that *Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*; and St. Peter says, *he was the fruit of David's loins according to the flesh.*

But though this be sufficient, yet the proof of this truth is more explicit than a bare affirmation. Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth, was a Jewish priest, a man of unspotted reputation, had his station and preferment in the temple, and was most unlikely to give a false account. He and his wife were intimately acquainted with our Lord's family, and his mother had been resident three months in his house when she was pregnant of our Saviour, and known to be so by Elizabeth. He blesses God upon that occasion, *for having raised up an horn*
of

of salvation in the house of his servant David.

The Jews above all other nations were extremely careful of their pedigrees, and most of them, especially the royal family and the priests, could trace their descent even from Adam. This was often of very great moment to them in the civil and religious polity of that nation; and the providence of God ordered it so, because it was one strong proof of our Lord's being the true Messiah. We have therefore two evangelists that give us our Lord's pedigree, without any collusion, verbatim, as they found it upon record, one from Abraham, and the other from the first common parent of all mankind; in both of these the parentage of our Lord is reckoned from

David. St. Matthew lays so much stress upon this point, that he entitles his gospel, *the Book of the Generation, or Pedigree of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*, as if the main end of his writing it was to shew, that Jesus Christ is the son of David and Abraham. But here it may be objected against the pedigrees, how do they prove the descent of our Lord from David, when they both only give an account of Joseph's ancestors, whose natural son our Lord was not, but say nothing of his mother Mary's lineage, from whom alone Christ was really descended. Besides this, every ordinary reader may observe the contradiction between them; St. Matthew says, *Jacob begat Joseph*, and draws his descent from David through Solomon; but St. Luke says,

be

he was the son of Heli, and follows the line up to David another way through Nathan, and not Solomon.

To these objections it may serve as one answer, that it cannot be supposed these two evangelists should be read by all the antient enemies of christianity, and yet none start the objection, nor any of its defenders take notice of it, unless there were in those days some known and easy way of reconciling them.

What may be proved at this day, is, that the jewish pedigrees were publicly preserved in a proper office in the temple, and might be searched and seen at any time while the temple stood; that there were pedigrees both of the natural and adopted line, so

that a person had often a legal parentage different from his natural, and both upon record; that no woman's name was in these registers, but you were to find her by her father or her husband's name, the first in common cases, the latter in cases of an heiress; for, when the male issue failed, then the heiress was obliged to marry one of the same tribe, and his name was inserted in her father's line, as having a right to her father's inheritance, and he, and his issue by her, were accounted the lawful issue of her parentage.

What then becomes of the contradiction between St. Matthew and St. Luke. It vanishes entirely upon these suppositions, that the father of the Virgin Mary had no male issue; that
she

she must be of the same tribe with her espoused husband; that Joseph must have two pedigrees upon record, the one his natural, the other his legal pedigree, and that one of these must of course be the natural genealogy of Mary his wife, and of Jesus her real, but his supposed son.

I am apt to think, that the pedigree in St. Matthew is the natural parentage of the Blessed Virgin, Joseph being only considered in it as the husband of Mary; and the word "begat," in the Greek, may be construed as well of adoption as natural paternity. So Jeconiah, whom the prophet Jeremiah threatens, that he should die childless, *begat Salathiel*, who outlived him, and whom St. Luke calls *the son of Neri*. Christ likewise is descended
from

from Zorobabel by Abiud in St. Matthew, and by Rhesa in St. Luke. So that, *Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary*, may signify no more, than that he had him to his son-in-law by being Mary's husband.

There are several considerations that corroborate this opinion. For St. Matthew, writing first, and with a particular view to this point, and counting the equal number of generations, under each æra, from Abraham to Christ, as the promises of the Messiah were renewed, must be most likely to take the natural lineage; while St. Luke, who wrote after, only to corroborate, not to confute St. Matthew, and to shew that Christ was descended from David, both by nature and by law, takes the legal genealogy.

Another

Another reason is, that though you read of our Lord's mother's sister, viz. Salome, the wife of Zebedee, yet there is no mention of a brother. A third argument is, that St. Luke is thought to have had his genealogy from the Roman enrollment (mentioned chapter second) which was kept at Antioch, where Luke dwelt.

For these reasons I believe the pedigree in St. Matthew to be the natural pedigree of Christ by the Holy Virgin, and that in St. Luke to be his legal kindred by the adoption of Joseph.

Besides these pedigrees, I might urge to your consideration, some foreign proofs that Christ was really what his disciples stiled him, *the son of David*.

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The severity of the Roman taxation, or enrollment of every person's name and family, is ordered by Providence as a proof of this important point. Obedience to this brought not only Joseph but the Virgin Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the town of David.

Thus far there is plain proof that Jesus was the son of David. If farther, you look through the succeeding prophecies, and compare one passage with another, according to the prophetic language, you have the same promise continued to David, not only by Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah, but even after the captivity by Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Malachi, when David's posterity had lost all temporal dominion. While they foretell the
desolations

desolations of the Jews, and the total destruction of their temple, and abolition of their government, religion, and priesthood, and the suffering, death, and humiliation of Christ; yet still do they promise restoration and honour, and a kingdom to David. In the midst of all their threats to disobedient Israel, they rise of a sudden into raptures of joy for this happy triumph and glory of this future kingdom. I will only mention one remarkable passage out of a number that might be produced. *The Children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without teraphim, that is, they shall be neither a nation nor a church, neither religious nor idolatrous, for a long period of time. Afterwards shall*

shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Nevertheless, he himself tells us, *his kingdom is not of this world.* It is a spiritual rule over the mind, the conscience, and the powers of the soul; a rule to which all the power of those who can only kill the body is as nothing; a power to which all the grandeur of earthly majesty is but as slavish pageantry and despicable vanity.

Yet, though Christ's kingdom be not of this world, it is in this world, and now in a militant state; though all things are put under him, yet all things are not yet subdued unto him, nor are all enemies yet brought to his footstool. He reigns now in a state
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of war, and we by baptism are listed his subjects and soldiers. We know who is our captain and leader when we fight against sin. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are the enemies of his kingdom, as well as our happiness. He has conquered, and so shall we, if we are faithful to him. Infidelity and Antichrist may war against his church or kingdom, but the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. He may remove his candlestick, the light of his gospel, from one nation to another, but his church shall still have a being somewhere, though militant, upon earth.

Thus, we see, that the authority of God's word is not invalidated by every difficulty, that puzzles us at this distance of time. The holy scriptures
are

are a noble study, well worthy the search of a gentleman; an exercise fit for the brightest parts and politest education; they are a magazine of the richest learning, and find matter for every talent; the more we search, the more we wonder at the exact harmony there is in itself, and with all other true wisdom and learning.

Infidelity takes shelter either under gross ignorance or grosser malice, and the dishonesty of deceivers makes it necessary to remove some stumbling blocks, which would be none to an unprejudiced fair reasoner.

If I believe God's word, I am persuaded that whenever it pleases God to accomplish his own promise, infidelity will have its fall, and true religion

ligion will triumph even in this world. But however that may be, let us all endeavour by our practice, to hasten that state of Christ's kingdom, when all enemies shall be subdued unto him.

Did the Wise Men of the East travel so far to pay their homage to their new-born king lying in a manger? Let us not refuse him our due devotion, now he is at God's right hand. Let us learn from him to renounce the world, and set our hearts upon, and seek after, better things in heaven where he reigns. Let us learn from his example the duties of patience, meekness, and love, like his to us, to God, and to one another. Let his holy sacrament be the sign and seal of our continued faith, love, and alle-

giance. "For thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge;" therefore, "O Son of David, have mercy upon us."

S E R M O N XIV.

PROV. xviii. 28. latter part.

*There is a friend, that sticketh closer
than a brother.*

AS ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel, says the Wise Man. Such, indeed, is the extraordinary excellence of friendship, that it was the principal circumstance which made David's affliction so intolerable. His companion and his friend was put from him; and there could be no aggravation of the misery he

endured, when his own familiar friend, in whom he trusted, was turned against him. This heroic virtue is pretended to by all, but understood or practised by very few. Let us, therefore, lest this precious blessing be driven out of the world, by the falshood of those who pretend to practise it, let us see what minds are prepared to receive and entertain it, by examining, first what in truth friendship is ; next, what are its chief obligations ; and lastly, what persons, by the excellence or corruption of their natures, are capable or incapable of being possessed of it, and of partaking the effects of its influence.

Perhaps it is easier to describe (as most men have done who have written of it) than to define friendship ; yet,

I know

I know not why it may not rightly be defined to be an union between just and good men, for the advancement of their mutual honour and happiness. It hath always been agreed, that there can be no friendship but between good men, because friendship can never be severed from justice, and consequently can never be applied to corrupt ends. Friendship neither requires nor consents to any thing that is not pure and sincere; they who introduce the least spot into the portraiture of friendship, destroy all its beauty, and render it so deformed, that it cannot be known. Let us then examine from this definition, what the obligations of it are, and what friends are bound under that seal to do, or suffer for one another.

The first and principal obligation is, to assist each other with their counsel and advice; and because the greatest cement that keeps them together, is the opinion they have of each other's virtue, they are to watch, as carefully as is possible, that neither of them swerve from the strict rules thereof; and if the least propensity towards it be discovered, to apply admonition and reprehension to prevent a lapse. He who sees his friend do amiss, and doth not do all he can to reform him, hath broken the laws of friendship, since there is no one obligation of such use and necessity. It is in truth so much the foundation of friendship, that, where that fails, the performance of all other offices is to no purpose. It may be observed further, that few men have ever fallen into any signal misfortune,

misfortune, at least not been overwhelmed by it, who have been possessed of a true friend. Counsel and reprehension was a duty in the Levitical law ; *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him* ; and we are told of a Rabbi, who thought it one of the principal causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, that they had left off reproving one another.

There is no doubt, but that the not exercising this essential part of friendship with that sincerity and plainness it ought to be exercised, hath been, and is, the occasion of infinite mischief. It hath almost annihilated this virtue, and brought it under reproach, as if prostituted to all the vile offices of compliance with the infirmities and

vices of the person it regards. It is thought to be a necessary office of friendship to conceal the faults of a friend, and make them to be thought much less than they are, and doubtless it is so. Every man ought to be very tender of the reputation of one he loves, and to labour that he may be well thought of and esteemed; that is his duty with reference to others; but he is neither to lessen nor conceal it to himself, who can best provide for his reputation, by giving no cause for aspersions; and he, who in such cases gives not good counsel to his friend, betrays him.

Under this head may be placed our endeavouring to advance the spiritual welfare of our friend, by exhortations and encouragements to virtue, by earnest

nest and vehement dissuasions from vice, and especially by kind and gentle reproofs, where there is reason to presume an offence has been committed. This is so peculiarly the duty of a friend, that there is none besides so justly qualified for its execution. The reproofs of a relation may be thought to proceed from an affectation of superiority; of an enemy, from a spirit of malice; and of an indifferent person, from pride or importance; and so may be slighted. But when they come from one who loves us, when they come armed with all the warmth and sincerity that an unfeigned friendship is known to dictate, they must of course take effect, and become irresistible. Men have no great inclination to be prying into their own deformities, and have such unwillingness
to

to hear of their fault, that whoever undertakes the work, had need of a strong pre-possession in his favour ; and therefore the friend, who alone is qualified for it, acts the part of a flatterer, and betrays the offender into security, when he sees him commit things worthy of blame, and yet silently overlooks them. *Open reproof*, says the Wise Man, *is better than such secret love ; for, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

The next duty of friendship, therefore, is entire confidence and communication. Without this faithful counsel, the just tribute of friendship can never be given ; and therefore reservation in friendship is like concealment in confession, which makes the absolution

lution void, as the other doth the counsel of no effect. It is the want of this entire confidence, this mutual communication and respect, which makes so many friendships of a day, or rather miscalls every short acquaintance, every light communication, by the title of friendship, of which very many of those are incapable, who are fit enough for acquaintance, and commendable enough in conversation. When thou hast considered this well (which thou canst not do without considering it long) if thou resolvest that he is fit for thy friendship, receive him into thy bosom, let him be possessed of all thy purposes, all thy thoughts; to conceal any thing from him now is an affront, and a disavowing him for thy friend, for without this sincere communication, the prin-

cipal use of friendship is abated and withheld, and the true virtue thereof undiscovered, and the comfort that attends it rendered void.

A third obligation in friendship is constancy, and continuing firm to its laws and obligations. A friend is not to be cast off or dismissed, but upon the most discovered and notorious transgressions, and even then there will remain some marks, nay, obligations, which can scarce be cancelled. We must never speak bitterly of him, the grateful memory of the past intercourse, and of some virtue that was in the object, should preserve him from that indecency.

There cannot be a greater manifestation, how falsely or weakly the usual friendships

friendships of the age are founded and entered into, than the common practice of many who profess friendship to-day, for those against whom they declare to-morrow the most mortal and implacable hatred and malice; who blush not the next day to depress the same man with all the imaginable marks of infamy, whom the day before they extolled with all the commendations and praises of which humanity is capable : whereas, in natural truth, modesty should restrain men, who have been given to speak too well of some men, from speaking at all ill of the same persons, that their former excess may be thought to proceed from their abundant charity, not from the defect of their judgment.

Solomon thought friendship so sacred a bond, that nothing but the
discovery

discovery of secrets could break it, and surely a greater violation of friendship cannot be than such a discovery, and scarce any other guilt towards the person of a friend can be equal to such perfidy. But friendship may be broken, and dissolved by faults committed against other persons, though of no immediate relation to the friend himself. When men cease to be of the same character which they really did, or professed, and seemed to maintain when that union was first formed; when they cease to be just towards men, and pious towards God, or fall into the practice of some notorious and scandalous vice, friendship is of so delicate a temper, that she thinks her own beauty impaired by these spots, and herself abandoned by that foul practice.

Since

Since then the temper and composition of friendship itself is so delicate, and the obligations of it are so indispensable, we cannot but discern how many sorts of men are utterly incapable of being admitted into that relation ; or rather, how few are to be received into the retinue of friendship to which all the world lays a claim. The proud man can scarcely act any part in friendship, since he reckons none to be his friends but those who admire him, and thinks very few wise enough to administer advice and counsel to him, nor will admit any man to have the authority of reprehension, without which friendship cannot subsist. The cholerick man can have very little partnership in it, since he abhors nothing so much as contradiction ; and friendship exercises no liberty

liberty so much as that of contradicting, and is as resolute in controuling, as the most stubborn nature can be in transgressing. The licentious man is so much a slave to his passions, that he abhors nothing so much as the name of friendship, which he knows would be always endeavouring to extinguish all those appetites, the satisfying whereof gives him all the pleasure he enjoys in life.

Lastly. To the covetous, unjust, and ambitious, nothing can be so uneasy, so grievous, and so odious as friendship, which affronts all their desires and pursuits, with rude discourses of the wealth of contentedness of the fame of integrity, of the state and glory of humility, and would persuade them to make themselves
happy

happy by renouncing all those things in which they place their happiness. Indeed, these vices, when become habits by repetition, have more poison in them than the antidote of friendship can expel. There must be some declension of their vigour, before they will permit the patient to reap the medicinal effects of any serious conversation or reproof. But as there is no perfection of nature, no accomplishment of manners, no degree of life to which friendship is not exceedingly useful, and which doth not receive infinite advantage from it; so it may by degrees, and faint approaches, be entertained by, and have effect upon even those depraved affections and tempers, which seem most averse from, and incapable of its offices and advantages.

Wicked men are often reformed by it, weak men seldom, and because discretion is always predominant in it, it works and prevails least upon fools. It doth not fly in the face of the proud man, nor endeavour to thrust him out of his way with unseasonable reprehensions, but watches fit occasions to present his own vices and infirmities in the persons of other men, and makes them appear ridiculous that he may fall out with them in himself. It provokes not the angry man by peremptory contradiction; it will not endeavour to reform those who are covetous, unjust, or ambitious, by persuading them that poverty is to be preferred before wealth, that it is better to be oppressed than to oppress, and that contempt is more to be affected than honour with guilt. Friendship
is

is neither obliged, nor obliges itself to such problems, but leaves it to those who value themselves for speaking what they think true, without caring whether it does good, or produces mischief. Friendship may lose its labour, but it is very solicitous that it may be useful, and therefore applies such counsels as it may reasonably presume will not be cast away. It will tell the covetous man that he may grow very rich, and yet spend part of his wealth as he gathers it, generously upon himself, and charitably upon others; it will put him in mind of Solomon's observation, that *there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.* Now, how far the apprehension of that, which he most endeavours to avoid,

may work upon him, depends much upon the force and power of friendship; and it hath wrought a great cure, if it hath prevailed with him to make his wealth his servant, and to do the business of a servant, instead of being a slave to his wealth.

It is not to be expected that all the precepts, and all the examples of the strongest friendship, shall have force enough to drive away all the malignity which possesses these several dis-tempered men. It will be a sufficient evidence of the divine influence of friendship, if it prevails with the proud man to be less proud; if it makes the angry man so much ashamed, as to blush for his impertinent rage, and though he cannot suppress it, yet to apologise for his infirmity; if it can persuade

S E R M O N XIV. For

persuade the covetous man to be less sordid towards himself, though not less avaricious towards others. In these cases it will have done great service, and sown seed that may grow up to the destruction of many of the weeds which are left. It hath been often seen, that many of these vices have been wonderfully diminished by the discreet correction of a friend, and rarely known that they have continued long in their full vigour, when they have been undermined by skillful friendship. In a word, friendship is so diffusive, that it will insinuate its effects to the benefit of all who are in any degree capable of receiving benefit from its influence.

Seeing then such are the advantages of friendship, let us, if we are desirous

of being thought worthy of this valuable blessing, divest ourselves of every meaner passion that may render us unfit for such an inmate, whose presence requires no small share of honour and conscience. We shall have occasion for noble sincerity and generosity of mind; for prudence of behaviour, for courage and constancy; for freedom from flattery and sinister designs. The man who is fit to be a friend, must have conduct to manage the engagement, and uprightness to maintain its purity; he must use freedom without roughness, and oblige without expectation. Cowardice will betray friendship, and covetousness will starve it; folly will be nauseous, and pride will fly out into contumely and neglect. It is well, indeed, if the proud man's favours are not turned
into

into injury, and spoiled either by the manner of doing, or by upbraiding after they are done. Such behaviour as this frights away friendship, and turns it into disgust and aversion; for friendship, though not nice and exceptionous, yet must not be treated coarsely, nor used with disdain. Since, therefore, such is the nature, such the delicacy, and such the difficulty of friendship, well may we conclude with the Wise Man, “that he who is capable of being a friend is more to be valued than the gold of Ophir.”

S E R M O N X V .

ACTS xvi. 30,

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

THESE words contain a serious and earnest enquiry about the greatest and most important concern in the world, namely, Salvation. The occasion of them was this; St. Paul and Silas, his then companion in labour, and in sufferings, were warned in a vision to go into Macedonia; and being come to Philippi, they found a certain young woman, possessed with an evil spirit of divination, who brought her
masters

masters much gain by soothsaying. The holy apostle, moved with christian compassion, restored her immediately to her right mind. Upon this, her masters, possessed with the worst spirit of the two (the devil of covetousness being ever worse than that of divination) were much enraged at the loss of her soothsaying, which to them was a daily income; and by telling other people's fortunes having much enlarged their own, they cast about with themselves how to be revenged on the men who had thus taken away the hope of their gains.

To do this the more effectually, they coloured over their own private spleen with the specious pretence of the public good (the usual art of self-designing men) and arraigned the apostles

ties before the rulers and magistrates of the city, as disturbers of the public peace, and innovators of their laws and liberties. The magistrates, either imposed upon by their cunning artifice, or what is worse, wilfully unjust, committed the innocents to prison, and condemned them to undergo that punishment, which was due only to their own crimes. When these guiltless sufferers were in this woeful condition (such is always the comfort of a good conscience, and the favour of God) they sang in their chains, and rejoiced more in their confinement than others do in their liberty. The rest of the prisoners stood amazed to (see men embrace chains, and to) hear them turn the horror and despair of a dungeon into joy and rapture. But to end their wonder, by shewing them whence their joy sprang, that it was a joy

joy in the Lord, God plainly appeared in their favour, by shaking off their chains, and opening the doors of the prison, thereby making way for escape. The gaoler awakened with their unusual sound of joy, and finding his captives set free from all his methods of confinement, was terrified into seriousness, and astonished into conviction. He threw himself at the apostles' feet, a slave to his own prisoners, and breaks forth into all the abruptness of a wild surprise, into the humble, devout, and passionate language of the text, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* These few, but very significant words, naturally offer (three things) to our thoughts.

(First.) That there is really such a thing as Salvation, that is, a being and happiness in another world,
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and that whenever men are made serious by a surprising accident, or any other means of recollection, it is the first thing that meets their thoughts, and immediately engages their belief.

Secondly. That as soon as they are persuaded, that there is such a state of salvation, the next enquiry naturally is, how they may become partakers of its blessings.

Thirdly. That something is to be done by them, in order to its attainment. *Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?*

Although the certainty of a life to come, is to be known by revelation only, yet the great probability of it was always clearly discernable by the light of nature. In all the writings
of

of the wisest heathens, we plainly find them under importunate longings after another life, and strong convictions of its reality. What caused this expectation of futurity, was, doubtless, the just deductions of their own reason, from various appearances of things in this world before them. For instance, they plainly saw, that in the numerous changes which matter went through, not one single atom of it was annihilated, and from thence wisely collected, that spirits, things of a far more excellent nature, in all reason should not be extinguished. (The argument received vast strength from this consideration likewise, that spirits, in their own nature, are simple and uncompounded beings, have no jarring qualities in them, as matter hath, which of course, hasten its corruption,

corruption, and consequently they must be infinitely more lasting, and can, indeed, be destroyed by nothing, but by him who made them.) Besides, these thinking men of the Heathen world, in reflecting upon their own make and frame, found that they were endowed with the noble faculty of reason, for the government of their own actions; that they were not necessary agents, or meer machines, but were ennobled with a liberty of choice and freedom of action; that they were under that awful power of the mind, which they called Conscience; that they had a power of distinguishing between good and evil, of chusing the one, and refusing the other; (and of reflecting upon themselves, according to their choice, or their refusal.) Hence, they rationally concluded, that they

they must be accountable creatures, and liable to answer for their conduct to some superior Being, and were capable of rewards and punishments from him. (Nay, the very power of thinking alone, confirmed Cicero in his belief of the immortality of the soul. I am persuaded, says he, (and who is not so upon the same reflection) with such swiftness of thought the soul is endued, with such wonderful memory of things past, and forecast of things to come; so many are the arts, the sciences, and the inventions it has discovered, that a nature endued with such faculties, cannot be mortal. >

Nor did they reason themselves into the belief of a life to come, from observing their own nature only. From
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the nature of God, and his government of the world, they knew well enough, that, if God existed at all, he must be a just and righteous Being, and for that very reason reward his creatures according to their works. Now, they could not avoid observing, that virtue and vice (things in their own nature eternally distinct) were not sufficiently distinguished by reward and punishment in this world. They, no doubt, often saw that spectacle, so shocking afterwards to men more enlightened, of vice flourishing in great prosperity, and virtue shamefully oppressed. This unequal appearance must force them to conclude, that God is not just, which is in fact to deny his Being; or, that after man has quitted this stage, another scene awaits him, when all these seeming ir-

regularities shall be set right, and God's universal justice (which in a great measure lies hid in clouds now) shall be sufficiently cleared up, and thoroughly displayed, in compleatly rewarding the good, and punishing the evil. But we, christians, are not left to these painful deductions of unassisted reason, to find out the certainty of a future state. We are assured of it from heaven by express revelation; God hath graciously brought life and immortality to light by his blessed gospel, and as it were opened a prospect for us into the other world. He hath clearly declared to us this eternal state, and in marvellous mercy and condescension, hath sent his own Son upon this gracious errand, to make us, otherwise forlorn creatures, an offer of it, and to instruct us, both by precept and example,

example, in the way thither. If we will allow the gospel of Christ to be the inspired word of God ; nay, if we do but allow it to be a true and authentic history of those wonderful matters of fact related in it, we have all the assurance in the world, that there is really such a thing as a future state, where there is eternal life and eternal death, which are to be very different allotments of the good and bad respectively.

For did our Saviour really rise from the dead, as it is there said he did ? Did this pass when it was first done without contradiction, at least without any proof of its being false (which if it had been so, nothing was more capable of being disproved ?) Was it confirmed by the living, nay, and dying

testimony of unquestionable witnesses? Of men who could have no interest to serve by it but that of truth, who were too wary to be imposed upon, or at least too wise to die for a falsehood? Why then, our Lord's Resurrection was a clear proof of an existence after death, a glorious instance and example of it; (and if men will not be persuaded by such an exemplary argument as this, I know of no possible way of convincing them, (except God Almighty (if it were possible to suppose it) should carry them to heaven or hell before they die, and (pardon the absurdity) make a thing present in order to prove that it will be future. But God, in his great wisdom, I might add justice too, hath not thought fit to give men such demonstration of these things, as that
they

they cannot disbelieve them if they will. He never designed to convince wilful obstinacy and affected unbelief. Besides, what commendation does such faith deserve into which we are thus forced? What thanks can we expect from God or man for believing ocular demonstration, and giving that assent which we are no longer able to withhold? It is excellently observed by the great Lord Bacon, as to downright Atheism, that God never wrought a miracle to convince an Atheist, because his ordinary works convince him. With the same reason may the same be said with respect to Deism. God works now no miracle, uses no extraordinary proof to convince any man who rejects and disbelieves Jesus Christ and his religion, because his ordinary proofs convince him.

The plain reason of this is, that he hath proved the truth of christianity to men as far as the nature of the thing will bear (and nothing can be proved any farther) to demand therefore more proof, shews that we want common sense as well as common candour. >

But however unbelievers may at present, whilst they are deluded by the enticements of pleasure, endeavour by turns of false wit and false reasoning to fence against the convictions of conscience, and the unanswerable evidences of a world to come; yet, when they are at any time beset with danger, and fear alarms them, then their mighty reasonings begin to fail them, and all their humour and gaiety sinks into terror and despair. But
above

above all, when the infidel sees death approaching, it awakens all the powers and faculties of his soul, and strips things of all the false colours sense and appetite hath put upon them, widens his prospect, and extends it into futurity. Whatever men may live, I hardly believe any one ever yet died a compleat Atheist. When he is about to quit this being, he hath strong misgivings about another untried existence, and is greatly perplexed with doubts and fears concerning a divine Being, whose vengeance is insupportable, and will pursue sinners to the uttermost. He can then no longer rejoice in his wonted resources, but in comfort to his own soul is forced to retreat from all his former wicked principles, while with infinite anxiety and horror, he silently says to him-

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not to
 self, or cries aloud to others, *What shall I do to be saved?* (This naturally falls in with the second observation from the text, viz. that men cannot but desire this eternal life upon the first intimation, and the least conviction of its reality. To love life is natural to man, as well as other creatures; and the great law of self-preservation founded *on the attachment* thereupon, is the first principle of his nature. (Hence, as holy Job says, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.*) If then this life, a state made up of trouble and sorrow, crosses and disappointments, diseases and death, be so desirable a thing, how much more eligible is that life which is eternal. A life truly so called, and which is as much preferable to this in its nature, as it is beyond it in its duration.

Eternal

Eternal life is continually to dwell in his presence, in whose favour is life; to be supported and made happy by his power, who can preserve us through endless successions of ages. It is to live in a place where there is no more sorrow nor lamentation, beyond the power of disease, beyond the reach of death. It is to enjoy happiness, great as the capacity, and immortal as the nature of the soul; (an happiness made for the soul, and the soul for it, commensurate to its duration, and equal to all its capacities;) an happiness that is easier to hope for and to enjoy than to comprehend, wherein greatness is added to glory, weight to greatness, and eternity to them all. For this reason it is called by the apostle, *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; a state wherein our joy shall be full,
yet

yet constant ; continual, yet delightful ; possessed, yet desired. To comprise all in one word, it is even in the language of him who revealed it to us, an happiness such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man fully to conceive.* Beyond all controversy this is so very desirable a happiness, that every man who loves himself must earnestly desire it. There is no room for deliberation, we must wish for it whether we will or no. But that which makes eternal life still more desirable is this, that it is an escape from eternal death, from misery exquisitely great, without intermission, and without end. For this reason it is elsewhere called Salvation. What heart can endure to think upon annihilation, much less of living in eternal death ? All men, therefore,

therefore, must be inquisitive after eternal life, must naturally desire its possession. "What shall I do that I may have eternal life," is a question which inevitably must sooner or later be asked, either secretly or openly, by every one, especially by those to whom this eternal life is revealed. That christians should ever, even for a time, be unconcerned about it, is monstrous, and would, if experience did not too often shew it, be inconceivable. This question was long the busy enquiry of the heathen world, and pity it is that it should not be more constantly the concern of the christian. (We almost always find the Heathens fond of the notion of a future state, because it squared with their natural desires and expectations of existence and happiness, which are vigorous in
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the minds of all men, who have not stifled their reason, and degraded their very nature. If then the Heathens upon their slender evidence, were so solicitous about eternal life, how inexcusable must Christians be in their neglect of such a blessing. All the interests and pleasures, all the riches and honours of this world, are nothing in comparison with the knowledge of this future state. All the comforts of this mortal life receive their relish from this blessed hope. None have denied it, but such as were either grossly ignorant, or had so far corrupted their natures by vicious practices, that it became their interest to believe there should be no future state, because they would not act in such a manner as to expect its enjoyment, or deserve its reward.

This

This naturally brings me to the third thing observable in the text, namely, that something is to be done by us, in order to the attainment of eternal life. That men are to do something towards the attainment of eternal happiness, seems as natural to suppose as it is to expect or desire that happiness; for it is directly founded in the eternal reasons and relations of things, that virtue alone can be rewarded with immortality. This is the voice of reason, as well as revelation; and the general applause of conscience in good men, and the terrors of the wicked, are a tacit but very evident proof of this eternal truth.

Thus we find the young man who came to our Saviour upon that important errand, eternal life, words his enquiry,

enquiry, *Good master, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?* What good thing shall I do? implying plainly, that even in his natural notion of things, some good thing is of necessity to be done, for the attainment of happiness hereafter. But if this be not sufficiently plain by the law of nature, it is, however, express and clear by the revealed law of God, and is, indeed, the very tenor of the comfortable and gracious covenant of the gospel; not that we are to imagine after all, that we can do any thing to attain this eternal life by way of merit. The best of our actions stand in need of a pardon, so far are they from deserving to be crowned. When we have done all we can, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants. There is more duty

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incumbent

incumbent upon us, from the original obligation of God's creating us, than we are able to discharge, much less can we challenge the great reward of eternal life. No, that is, as the apostle says, *the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Not so a gift, indeed, as to be bestowed upon us without any condition, which is the proper notion of a gift, but it is suspended upon the conditions of faith and repentance, and a sincere obedience. We are obliged by our baptismal covenant, to do all we can to be made partakers of the kingdom of heaven, which, if we do, we shall by virtue of God's promise, and the intercession of our Saviour, be certainly admitted into that kingdom, but we can never purchase it at the hands of God.

Nevertheless,

(Nevertheless, good works are necessary to salvation; for, though they are not properly the cause of our justification, yet they are certainly the conditions of it; though they do not make us strictly worthy, yet they will make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light. On the other hand, it must readily be confessed that we are unable to do any thing toward the attainment of eternal life, without the assistance of God's good grace.) Without God we can do nothing, no, not so much as think a good thought, much less do any action well pleasing unto him. It is *he that worketh in us, both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure.* Not that God must do all and we nothing, and by that means turn religion, which is an active principle, into a passive indolence.

indolence. The plain state of the case is this, we must do all we can, to make ourselves good, though all our endeavours are by themselves ineffectual to that end; and what we want by nature will be made up by grace. God will not be wanting on his part, to finish what we have begun on ours, and will not only give us power to obey, but add reward to our obedience. So that it is, in short, through our nature's being improved and perfected by the energy of grace, that we are enabled to work out our salvation, and gain eternal life. To conclude then, if we believe that there is such a thing as eternal life, (and if we are christians, we do and must believe it) we cannot but be very solicitous about its attainment, and make it, as it certainly is, the greatest concern of our

whole lives, what shall we do, or rather, what shall we not do, that we may have eternal life? If any of us be at a loss to know what he must do for this glorious end, our Blessed Saviour will inform him in his answer to the enquirer: *If thou wilt, says he, enter into life, keep the commandments; not this or that commandment, such as may suit best with our inclination, or our interest, but all the commandments, because they are all enacted by the same authority, and consequently of equal obligation to us.* Accordingly the young man answers for himself, *All these have I kept from my youth up.* Nor do we find that our Saviour charged him with the breach of any one of the commandments; and, therefore, without doubt he was a very good moral man, much more so than the Pharisees,

sees, those pretenders to extraordinary righteousness, who were much more solicitous about appearances than realities, much more attentive to forms than essentials, and while they were precise in the observance of ceremonial ordinances, those minuter matters of the law, were careless of its weightier points, justice and mercy. But whoever hopes to enter into the kingdom of heaven, while he performs the one, must be above all things careful not to leave the other undone; for this, and this alone, gives a satisfactory answer to the words of the text, and informs us what we must do to be saved.

S E R M O N XVI.

GENESIS v. 27.

*And all the Days of Methuselah were
nine hundred sixty and nine years, and
he died.*

SUCH is the concluding account of all that is human. The man was great, powerful, and wise; he, perhaps, was good too; he lived some time, and he died. The life of Methuselah was not indeed included in the short space in which ours is usually determined, he lived nine hundred sixty and nine years.

One might indulge the imagination in considering if this old man was wise, and how many useful observations he might make in such a space, on the humours and conduct of men. If inclined to the improvement of arts and sciences, to what an height he might have carried them; if pious and good, what proofs and instances he might have remarked of the wisdom and justice of Providence. Be this, however, as it may, what varieties and vicissitudes of things, what alternate scenes of joy and sorrow, must have presented themselves, what a number and surprising variety of accounts must he have been able to give, in the latter part of so extended a life. But not to dwell on these, we see that the longest day, even every thing that is not eternal, must have an end; after
nine

nine hundred and sixty-nine years, Methuselah, like the rest of mankind, was gathered to his fathers.

The account in the text, though merely historical, may very well furnish us with matter for many considerations.

1st. The fact itself gives us occasion of enquiring into the reasons and causes of the long extent of human life in the first ages of the world.

2dly. The important, however well known truth here intimated to us, that the longest life must come to an end, will suggest some useful reflections.

First then ; among the reasons which Divine Providence seems to have had in view, in granting so long a life to the first inhabitants of this world, the peopling of its new creation may first be mentioned. When God created this lower world, and enriched it with such a number and variety of his gifts, he designed it for the possession and empire of mankind ; but he did not think good to replenish it at once with a multitude of them. He brought two only into being, and left the rest to descend from them in a natural way.

Whether he designed by this to form them to the most beneficial institution of government, by using them to respect and submit to the heads and fathers of their families, or to tie them

them together more closely in love and mutual affection among themselves, by the obvious consideration of their being all brethren and kinsmen, descended from the same common original, or by whatever good and wise reasons he was determined, this was the course of his providence.

Such being the resolution of the author and parent of all things, it seems necessary that he should bestow so long a continuance to those who were to people the world. For, if we consider the encrease of mankind at present, it seems like that of an oak, or plant, of a slow growth, where the new foliage seems only to succeed what is fallen off; and though it be always thriving, and in reality encreasing, no remarkable augmentation

tion of bulk is discernible for long tracts of time.

Had the original parents of mankind at first decayed, had they been of that short-lived kind which we are of at present; though the tree had been disrobed of none of its branches by tempests, though plagues and other sweeping distempers had never invaded them, their number must have been very contemptible; our earth, or rather a part of it, would have been thinly inhabited after a course of many succeeding centuries. But life being at first so long a blessing, youth, and the vigour of manhood continuing for centuries, mankind must increase in a wonderful proportion. A few persons must see themselves become a nation. Agreeable to this we may observe,

observe, that after the flood, when the earth was to be repeopled by a greater number, the age of man was proportionably shortened, though still extended to a greater length than it was generally afterwards; when, if mankind had lived as long, and encreased in the same proportion as formerly, they must have become an inconvenience to one another, and the earth have been overburthened with its inhabitants.

But there is another end which the good providence of God might well propose to itself, in suffering the thread of life to be drawn out to so extraordinary a length, viz. the propagating and confirming those traditions and revelations which were to be the fundamentals of religion, such as the cre-

ation of the world, the fall and debasement of mankind, the restoration of them by a Redeemer, and a future and immortal state.

It was of the greatest consequence that these truths should be generally known and received among men. Now, though it be only one of the fond opinions of those, who rather than not oppose religion will oppose good sense, that the force and conviction arising from human testimony, continually lessens as it is more removed from its original (for who doubts now of what Cæsar, Plutarch, or any other credible author relates, any more than they did one century after it was first written) yet in the infancy of the world the case seems somewhat different; they had not then

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(at least not for a long time) the use or notion of written evidences. They could not collate copies preserved by men of different nations and interests, antient or original, with modern transcripts, and be thereby satisfied what was genuine and true, what they might receive on the credit of such an author.

Their assent must arise from the reputed veracity of the relator, as it doth now among Indians and other nations, where arts and sciences have no place. It had therefore a great influence on the belief of mankind, that they might for some centuries hear what had happened, and what had been revealed to Adam, from his own mouth, and for many more ages, from those who had received it immediately from him.

There

There is also another thing which seems worthy to have been had in view, by the good providence of him who is the creator of mankind, and great author of their happiness, viz. the improvement of arts and sciences.

The generality of mankind are apt to content themselves with plain necessities, with what may barely feed and cloath them, and will not rack their inventions for any thing extraordinary. This is so notorious, that one would almost think that our first parents had been taught not only to cloath themselves, but to turn themselves and their immediate families to the care of agriculture; and that this example once given, those about them happily followed their steps.

For

For what numbers are there among the nations separated from our world, to whom these obvious improvements are not yet known, who live upon what the earth spontaneously produces, or what their bow and javelin immediately furnishes.

But supposing useful inventions to have been then more common, yet every art must depend as to its improvement, on many repeated experiments; and whatever might have been made, as to this kind, might easily have been lost, and would probably have perished with its author; for the method of preserving things by writing, seems too refined an invention to have been early known in the world.

If

If what is preserved of it among the Egyptian monuments be the most ancient (which is not improbable) it is of a very imperfect kind. The symbols there made use of might preserve some facts and notions in the mind of their author and contriver, but could minister nothing but doubtful conjectures to others.

If then any useful improvement had been made, and been only known to one or two such short-lived men as ourselves, it might soon have been lost and forgotten; or if any thing of it had been remembered, it would only have given occasions of regret and sorrow, that something beneficial to mankind had been once brought to light, but was again, perhaps for ever, lost, the inventor perishing before he
had

had opportunity of communicating it to the public.

On this account then, we may probably conclude, in the infancy of the world, when arts were yet unknown, or in their most imperfect state, the thread of human life was drawn out to so considerable a length, that the first inventor might have time to improve, what chance, or a fortunate conjecture had taught him; to multiply experiments and confirm his observations, to communicate to numbers whatever he had found useful and ornamental in human life.

Much, indeed, was to be invented before the fig leaves and skins of beasts were improved into decent and convenient apparel; before men had

leisure to observe the differences of
sounds, to mix and modulate them so
as to sooth the ear or charm the mind,
to soften the cares or heighten the joys
of life.

These, and some other equally wise and good ends, the wisdom of an adorable Providence, may well be thought to have designed, in conferring so long a life on the first inhabitants of the world. The natural means whereby it was effected, deserve a little consideration.

These probably, besides the strength and vigour of the constitution with which men's bodies were originally formed, were first the simplicity of their manner of living; their freedom from ambition and other corroding

cares; from idleness and vice, the great enemies of health, and parents of the most fatal distempers.

It is, I think, scarce to be questioned, that the wise Creator of men adapted the strength and vigour of their constitutions at first, to the time he proposed for their continuance.

It is easy to see how much this must contribute towards the extending human life to a very uncommon length. For we see now frequent instances, how a robust and well constituted body will hold out against unwholesome air, improper diet, and long and wearisome labours. We often see (and we must lament that we do see it) men devoted to the indulging of their passions, and the mad joys of

intemperance, stand surprising and repeated shocks, such as one would think must at once destroy the human frame; and all this by the strength of an excellent constitution, which, to speak the most softly, they ill deserve.

When men therefore were at first so strongly constituted, no wonder that like the sturdy oak they stood long unshaken; that, after their arriving at full growth, they for some ages shewed no sensible decay; especially if we suppose, as many have rationally done, that they breathed a softer, a more balmy, and more healthful air before the flood. The deluge, which the universal corruption of mankind brought upon them, seems to have reduced our globe into its primitive chaos, to have mixed and confounded

together

together all its component, however heterogenous parts.

Hence, not only the outward beauty of the earth was impaired ; we not only frequently see craggy, barren precipices, and dreary caverns, instead of regular ascents, pleasing plains, and moderate vallies ; but the air is frequently corrupted with noxious, if not pestilential vapours.

No doubt things came not thus out of the hands of the benign Creator, we inhabit but the ruins of that world, which, when he had finished, he pronounced exceeding good. Had mankind been as good, as grateful as they ought to have been, they had yet inhabited another kind of world than what we now see, and had en-

joyed it as they did at first for many ages. They might have been secure of this, had they also persevered in that simplicity of living, which, doubtless, in the first ages of the world universally prevailed.

Men had not yet searched the remotest corners of the earth, and the recesses of the sea, for varieties of a doubtful, and even pernicious nature. They had not yet learned to mix together in the same repast, a thousand different and disagreeing viands, such as raise an unnatural fermentation in our veins, and even render ineffectual the endeavours of the physician. They had not yet received so dangerous a knowledge, as to know how to regain and to put a new edge on a surfeited appetite, the fatal contrivance of a refined

refined, but most pernicious luxury. Their diet was plain and simple, such as was best suited to the end of it, the giving a moderate nourishment to the body, and such recruits to the spirits as labour and exercise made requisite. No wonder then if they so much outlived us, when the contrary of all this is fashionable, when such temperance is only what health prescribes, but few, very few practise.

We indulge our palates too much, and too far refine upon our pleasures, to enjoy either them or life long. The first ages of the world were happily ignorant of that elegance of living, upon which many now set so high a value. With a coarse and simple diet, they continued strong and healthy; life only wore away by gentle decays,

burned clear to the last, and was very long before it was utterly extinguished. But another, perhaps, one of the principal reasons for long life, is yet behind, namely, freedom from ambition and corroding cares; from idleness and vice, the mother of diseases and harbinger of the grave. In the pursuit after grandeur, riches, and other splendid advantages, many will oppose our course, and if possible stop our career, through a maliciousness of temper or envious disposition. Others, if they envy us not, are desirous to mount to the same eminence, and possess themselves of the same power and wealth at which we are aiming; and possibly the way is so narrow we cannot all ascend together, the advantages so singular, that few only can attain unto them at once.

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If it be thus, we can expect no other but that our competitors, if possible, will thrust us aside to make room for themselves. It is well if they do this fairly and openly ; if they take no indirect methods to disappoint us ; if they do not injure our persons, or at least our characters, in order to defeat our expectations. If they attain what should be the rewards of virtue and merit, by corrupt and unworthy means, when we discover it, resentment and indignation set our blood in a ferment, and destroy our peace of mind. We stigmatize our adversaries ; we distrust and murmur at our friends, as if they had been wanting to our interests ; at least, if religion as well as reason interpose not, we look with an evil eye upon the fortunate, and take a kind of revenge on them,
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by degrading them as low as we can in our own opinions.

But disappointments of this nature sink still deeper into our minds, when we are induced, not only by ambition and covetousness, but by real necessities; sorrow in this case joins with indignation, and preys upon our spirits. When we labour under these resentments the mind is clouded, and our vigour by degrees impaired; and so closely united is the mind and body, that neither can well suffer alone. These tumultuous and stimulating passions prey upon our vitals; and though they may destroy us more slowly, yet they do it as certainly, if not abated, as an acute disease. Most probably, indeed, as great a number is worn out by these means, as
many

many lives are shortened by corroding passions, and the uneasy reflections of a galled and discontented mind, as by any other distemper.

But the first ages of the world were not generally obnoxious to these diseases of the mind; luxury and vanity had not yet put men upon desiring more than was necessary for a comfortable subsistence. When men were content to feed on what the earth readily produced, and were satisfied with an artless covering, which their own flocks afforded, there was little room for envy; they had no need to supplant each other, for the earth was large enough, and each might chuse what was sufficient for himself, without repining at what another had taken, or causing any one to envy or grudge at his choice.

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As they were not open to the edge and force of these impairing passions, they were not yet sunk down into idleness; nor were they tainted with the vices which are so notorious and flagrant in the short-lived generations of other times. They were under the useful necessity of undergoing some labour and pains in order to support themselves; and I need not say, that motion and exercise contribute so much to the serenity of the mind, and health of the body, that all the succours which medicine affords (generally to supply the want of them) fall incomparably short of their salutary effects.

If this contributed not a little to the strengthening of their days, freedom from vice did more. Innocence

and virtue are the great preservatives of health, and these had a more absolute empire among men in their primitive state, than they have generally had in more modern times.

Though man lost his perfection at the fall, and became obnoxious to transgression, he was not wholly infected on a sudden. Wickedness, as well as other things, had its gradual growth and improvement. Men were long and happily ignorant of that monstrous intemperance into which later times have fallen. They did not immediately think of curing the ill effects of one excess by a greater; of warding off uneasy reflections by keeping themselves in an unthinking condition. I am so far from imagining our age the worst and most corrupt
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which has existed, that I cannot but censure the general management of that argument as peevish and declamatory. Doubtless, we often think the worse of our own times, because we know them thoroughly, whilst the faults of former ages are in a great part forgotten. Notwithstanding this, comparing our own with the first ages of the world, we may certainly pronounce men now much more vicious and corrupted. They could not in their first stages be so bad as they have been since; for, supposing them to have had the inclination, they had wanted opportunity. Men must have had some number of evil examples before them, and more companions in wickedness than could well be procured, before the forming of large societies, ere they could so far steel their consciences

sciences as to commit what we have since heard, seen, and lamented.

Nor did Providence at first seem to entail on some vices, such immediate and grievous consequences as have since attended them, and have descended, under a thousand miserable appearances, a wretched legacy to a suffering posterity.

These, probably, were the reasons and causes of so long an extent of human life in the first ages of the world; but although life was drawn out then beyond the example, and almost belief of later times, an immortality hath been conferred on none of the sons of Adam. However late, they all at length descended into the silent mansions of the grave: *All the days of Methuselah*

Metbuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years, and he died.

The reflections which this truth intimates to us, namely, that the longest life will come to an end, are as important, as they are manifest.

First. Will life, however long it be protracted, have a period? Let this teach us to estimate things, which, at what distance soever we imagine them, will surely come to pass, as if they were now present. Let our constitutions be ever so happy, the care of our health exact and scrupulous, let no evil accident overtake us, nor sorrow nor passion molest and weary us; yet as our bodies are not made for eternity, our last hours will come; then (if our affairs are not in order)

order) it will confound and trouble us, when we have need of nothing but to be sick and die. If our peace be not before settled with heaven, distress and anguish will then lay hold on us, we shall with just reason dread the making our appearance before our great Judge, when we expect nothing but a severe sentence, eternal condemnation.

Let us reason with ourselves, with that sobriety and attention which the importance, the great importance of the subject requires. Whatever pleasure we take in indulging our appetites and passions, will there not come a severe reckoning at last? Will not the years, however many, that we have thus spent, seem then, and be to all intents and purposes, as if they had never been? When we come to leave

the world, shall we not wish we had acted otherwise than we do; that we had despised each unlawful, however considerable gain; that we had curbed each appetite, and refused each unlawful gratification.

This, certainly, shall we think at last. We shall then wish we had chosen the frowns of this world (if it must be so) that we might have departed secure in a well-grounded hope, and entered into the presence of God with joy and approbation. If condemnation and punishment must be the portion of the wicked after death, how vainly do we amuse ourselves by putting the evil day at a distance? Were we secure of Methuselah's life, yet is it not dreadful to think, that after some hundreds of years, we shall
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be doomed to sorrows unutterable, without end?

Considerations of this nature can hardly be entered upon, without putting us upon a review of our past lives, and comparing them with the holy rule we should walk by; they will naturally affect us with sorrow for the time we spent amiss, and must one day account for; they will, at least they ought, to put us upon endeavouring to lessen the evils we have done, by restitution, by confession of our errors, and the firmest resolutions of being wiser and better for the future.

Let it be thus, and the rather as our lives are likely to be but a span long, in comparison of that of Methuselah.

He might have indulged himself in sin for many years, with as little presumption as we can a few days or weeks. Let us then labour to redeem the time, to lengthen out a life, short as ours is likely to be, by a number of good works, by being constant and zealous in all the duties which we owe to the Majesty of Heaven, unwearied in our endeavours to be useful to mankind in our several stations; that whether our time be long or short, the employment of it may have the approbation of him, in whose hand is the spirit of every living creature; the breath of all mankind.

The same considerations should wean our thoughts from the world, and fix them on a better, an enduring, an unchangeable state. To whatever splendid

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condition we might possibly arrive, it should moderate our desire, to consider how little a time we are likely to possess it, that after some space we must lie down promiscuously with the most ignoble and vulgar, and be all reduced to the same undistinguishable ashes. Let us content ourselves then, though we possess not all we wish; we are but sojourners, and whether we have all the desirable conveniences or not, we shall regret it but a little at our journey's end.

Let us turn our views to that happy and never ending state, which God hath prepared for all them that love and serve him; where are all the good men that are gone before us; where, if through his mercy we arrive, we shall be far more blessed than they, who are most happy in all

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that this world can afford, where we shall live not only *nine hundred and sixty and nine years*, but for ever and ever.

SER.

S E R M O N XVII.

3 J O H N, 5.

*Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever
thou doest to the brethren, and to
strangers.*

BY the Brethren, we may under-
stand those who were of the
same church with Gaius, to whom
this epistle of St. John was written,
or at least of the same city where his
habitation was.

By *Strangers*, is meant those other
Christians, who either through perse-

cution were constrained to come thither for shelter, or whose necessary business and secular affairs drew them thither. Although these also were brethren in a more general sense, yet, being strangers, those others at home might in a stricter sense be so called, as being brethren, not only in respect of their common faith and profession of the same christian religion, but also in respect of their more particular relation to one another, as fellow members of the same church, or inhabitants of the same city.

Now, as among many other good things, which, without all question, were to be found in Gaius, the apostle singles out this particular, that he did faithfully, whatsoever he did in charity and kindness, both to the brethren
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and to strangers; and, whereas he doth not so much commend him for the thing done (how good soever in itself considered) as for the manner of doing it; we may hence observe, that it is a great duty of a Christian to do every thing faithfully. I shall therefore,

First. Shew what it is to do all things faithfully, or wherein this faithfulness consists, and what are its chief ingredients.

Secondly. Why it is so great a duty, and what reasons there are why so much stress should be laid upon it in the gospel.

Thirdly. I shall apply what shall have been spoken.

First,

First, I am to shew what it is to do every thing faithfully. In the general, to do any thing faithfully, is nothing else but to do it sincerely, and in singleness of heart, as looking unto God. This Hezekiah expresseth by *walking before God in truth, and with a perfect heart.* And the apostle expresseth it, *by doing every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men.* In this expression the following things are comprehended.

1st. That we be careful, whatsoever we do, to act agreeably to our master's will; that we do nothing but what we know he commands or allows, and that we do not in any thing prefer our own will before his. Upon this God much insists, *Whatsoever thing I command you, observe to do it;*

thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it; ye shall observe to do as the Lord your God hath commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. This exact observation of the rule, and strict adherence thereunto, is required even in those cases wherein our reason, perhaps, may dictate somewhat else to be done, rather than what God commands. We must hearken to no suggestions of carnal reason where the pleasure of God, however contrary it may be, is clearly revealed to us. Against this God often cautions his people; *Ye shall not do after all that ye do this day, every man what is good in his own eyes.*

The first thing, therefore, required in faithfulness is, that we act in conformity to God's command or allowance,

ance, not preferring our will before his in any thing; nor so leaning to our own understanding, as to be thereby drawn aside to the one hand, or the other.

2dly. In matters of duty, he that would do what he doth faithfully, must not only do what is commanded him, but do it in obedience to God, and with respect to his command. A man may do many things that are commanded, for his own purposes rather than his master's commands; yea, though he do what is commanded, yet, perhaps, his master's command had no influence upon him at all, and he would never have done it, unless there had been somewhat else to induce him thereunto, besides his master's pleasure. God commands us
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many things which suit well with our secret plans and interests, and thereupon a man doth what is commanded, but not so much because it is commanded, as because it furthers his own secular advantages and worldly designs. Doth he herein what he doth faithfully? Doth he sincerely serve his master, or rather doth he not serve himself? Instances in this kind are easily to be found. To be diligent in our calling, to be as good as our word, to be punctual with every man with whom we have any intercourse, to deal justly and fairly with all, these are things which God strictly enjoins, and on which he lays much weight; but they are also things which make much for a man's reputation in the world, which make others willing to employ him, to deal with him, and

trust

trust him, and consequently which must conduce to the advantage of every one in the concerns even of the present life. Now, how many are there who do all these external things which God hath commanded, but without any respect at all to his command, and purely with respect to their worldly interest, that they may preserve their reputation, increase their business, and thereby improve their fortunes, and raise their families.

Now, though such men may truly be said to deal faithfully with men, yet can they never be said to do what they do faithfully in reference to God; because doing nothing of all this with respect to him, and in obedience to his command, they are not in truth so much his servants in what they do as
their

their own. To do such things as these, and all other things faithfully, in reference to God; to do them as Gaius did, is to do them with respect to God's commands. This was David's case, to *have respect to all God's commandments*. To look at the command of God, and to do every thing as designing and aiming at a conformity to his will; this is to do things *in singleness of heart as unto God, and heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men*.

3dly. To do any thing faithfully, is to do it from right motives, and to worthy ends. One end we should propose to ourselves in all our actions, is to please God, and to have acceptance with him. The apostle, exhorting to a charitable relief of those who are in want, draws an argument to persuade

persuade us to such charity, from the acceptance that it hath with God; thereby teaching us, that God is pleased with what we do, and that his acceptance of us ought to be one chief end in all our actions. *To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* He uses the same argument when he exhorts children to be obedient to their parents; *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* It was therefore David's earnest prayer unto God, that all his thoughts and words might be pleasing to God, *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.* This was also St. Paul's great care and endeavour; *We labour, saith he, that whether absent or present,*

present, we may be accepted of him; and his prayer in behalf of the Colossians was, that they might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing.

Another end that we should propose to ourselves in our actions, is the good of others, according to the nature and tendency of the action, and so far as it relates to the good of our brethren. *Let all things be done with charity,* saith the apostle. Now, charity hath respect not only to our own benefit, but also to the benefit of others. And again, *let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.* Let him not seek his own wealth, his own profit or advantage alone; his own, to the detriment, prejudice, or hindrance of his brother, but his brother's as well as, and together with

his own. Thus then we have seen what it is to do whatsoever a man doth faithfully. He doth every thing faithfully, who is carefully solicitous in all things to have his warrant or allowance from the word of God; who, in matters of duty, hath an eye to God's command, and doth not only what is commanded, but because it is commanded; and lastly, who doth all things from right motives and to worthy ends; which brings me to what I proposed secondly—or why is it so great a thing, a duty of such importance to a christian, to do whatsoever he doth faithfully? Now, for this, there are several reasons.

1st. Without this faithfulness no service is valued or accepted of God. Where this is wanting, the
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most specious, the most splendid, and glorious services in his account signify little or nothing, whatever esteem men may have of them. Whence is it that the very sacrifices of the wicked, the best things they do, are so far from being pleasing unto God, that they are an abomination to him. Is it not because they do nothing faithfully? Is it not because their hearts being not right, they do nothing sincerely, nothing from due motives and principles, nothing to right ends? Certainly this is one thing, and not the least, that makes all their performances of no avail with God, though the sinfulness of their hearts, and the wickedness of their lives, make God abhor their services, as he often declares; yet, this very thing, that they do nothing faithfully, as unto God, (that is, in such a manner, with

such a frame of heart, and to those ends which he requires) is the chief cause that renders their best actions unpleasing in his sight, because they come from them, and are performed by them. This is what Solomon seems to intend, and the account which he seems to give of this matter. *The sacrifice of the wicked, saith he, is abomination to the Lord; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?* As if he had said, though the wickedness of his life be enough to make God loath every thing he doth, even his very sacrifice; yet that he bringeth it with a wicked mind; that, pretending to worship God, his heart is false and deceitful; that he hath base ends and designs of his own in what he would be thought to do for God, and to God; this makes his ser-

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vices more odious and abominable unto him.

2dly. There is no service, however mean and trifling, in man's account, but is both accepted and rewarded of God, if it be done faithfully. *Who-soever shall give to any one but a cup of cold water to drink in Christ's name,* and because he belongs to him, to a disciple in the name of a disciple, as such and upon that account, he shall in no wise lose his reward. A man may give far greater things than a cup of cold water, and that to a disciple too, and yet shall he have no reward from God, if he give it upon some other undue consideration, and for some secret purpose of his own ; but let him do what he doth faithfully and sincerely, to a disciple in the name of

a disciple, and he shall not lose his reward, though he gave him but a cup of cold water to drink. He may be apt to think that so poor a thing will never be so far regarded, or taken notice of, as to be rewarded; but Christ, with much earnestness, hath declared, that even so trifling a thing as this, so performed, shall not go unrewarded. Our Saviour, to ratify his promise, and to make it the stronger, uses such a manner of speech as hath a double emphasis in it: he doth not barely affirm it, but he doth it with a serious and solemn asseveration; *Verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward*; and again, *he shall in no wise lose his reward*. Thus, we see, whatsoever is done faithfully, and by whomsoever, it shall be accepted and rewarded. But where this faithfulness

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is wanting, there the better our services are in appearance, the more notoriously and grossly do we play the hypocrites. For in such services we do in special manner pretend to honour God and seek his glory ; but when it is only pretended, and we really mind nothing less than what we outwardly profess, how odious and abominable must this be in his sight, who is a spirit, and will be served in spirit and in truth. Remember then that God is not mocked, that is, he is not deluded, and put off with outward shews and appearances instead of realities, as men may be who look upon the outward appearance, but cannot look into the heart ; for, *what a man soweth, that he shall assuredly reap.*

S E R M O N XVIII.

3 JOHN, 5.

*Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever
thou doest to the brethren, and to
strangers.*

THIS short epistle of St. John, was written to Gaius, a sincere and zealous christian. Where he lived, and to what church he belonged, is uncertain. But wheresoever his abode was, whether at Corinth, Derby, or Ephesus, or elsewhere, it is evident that he was a man eminent for religion, and greatly useful in his station.

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But the principal thing which the apostle takes notice of in him, for which he commends and encourages him, is his charity and hospitality to the saints, in relieving them, and giving entertainment to them, or rather his uprightness and sincerity therein. *Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.*

In the former discourse from these words, I endeavoured to shew what it is to do every thing faithfully, and why this is so great and important a duty. I shall now proceed to apply what was said on this subject. And first, this presents just matter of humiliation to us, even to the best amongst us, because there is so little, so very little of this faithfulness to be

be found in our actions and services. We may be apt to think we have done a great deal of good several ways, and so please ourselves in the expectation of our reward; but if things be well examined, how little shall we be found to have done, that will be approved of, and advance our account hereafter? How much pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy; how much seeking of ourselves and our own things, instead of seeking the glory of God and the things of Christ! How many of the good things which we have done, have been done by us from other lower considerations than the command of God; from other motives and to other ends, than that we might thereby honour and please him, and be accepted with him? Instances of our miscarriages this way might be
endless

endless almost, if it was expedient to enlarge upon them; I shall only hint at some few instances, that by our failings in them we may be the better able to understand ourselves, and know how we ought to judge of ourselves in reference to the rest of our life, and its various failings and miscarriages.

My first instance shall be, that of men's employment in the way of their trade and commerce. This is the main business of their life, and takes up the most considerable part of their time; to which I may also add, that it is the business on which their abilities and strength are mostly exerted. Great pity therefore it is that so little of what they do in this way should turn to their account hereafter; that so little is done faithfully and sincerely, as unto God,
and

and not to men. For how common a thing is it with most men in their dealings, to look no farther than their own outward advantage, and the procuring a competent, or a fair and comfortable livelihood and subsistence for themselves, and their relatives. Where, almost, is the person to be found, who doth every thing in the way of his calling, as unto God, and not to men ; who sets God before his eyes continually in all his transactions ; who treats every man with whom he deals, as in God's sight ; who seeks and consults the good of others as well as his own, in every bargain he makes ; in a word, who discharges all the duties of his particular calling, with a respect to God's command, with a design of pleasing him, and being accepted of him. Let
those

those who are engaged in trade, or commerce, lay their hands upon their breasts, and ask their own hearts, whether this be their daily practice. If they reflect upon their conduct impartially, and search narrowly, it is to be feared they will find too much cause to be humbled for their failings.

A second instance may be taken from those in the lower ranks of life, who are very constant and industrious in their labour, for such many of the poorer sort are (though many others of them eat the bread of idleness, whose hands refuse to labour, and will not have honest employment when they may; but with respect to those before spoken of, who are diligent and industrious,) they rise betimes in the morning, they follow their work closely

closely all the day, and go late to bed at night; a very commendable thing in them, and greatly to be encouraged; but yet, alas! what is their great end in all this? Do they mind God in their employment? Are they diligent in their calling, because he commands them so to be? Do they in their daily occupation intend the serving of his Providence? Do they seek his glory in that low condition of life? Do they humbly and contentedly submit to his Providence in thus disposing of things, and in allotting them so slender a portion of the things of this life, and putting them to get their livelihood in so painful and laborious an occupation? As low as their condition is, do they seek to honour God in it as much as they can? If they do so, then they do
faithfully

faithfully what they do in their mean condition; and they may assure themselves, that as their eye is on God, so God's eye is on them, he takes notice of, and will assuredly reward their faithfulness. But how few are there who look so high as to mind God at all, or in the least study to approve themselves to him?

Another instance may be taken from the conduct, both of parents and children. Most parents, it is true, are not without natural love, affection, and tenderness for their children in their younger years; and when they are grown up they are full of careful thoughts about them, and so studious of their temporal welfare, that they think they can never do enough to promote their worldly prosperity. Yet,
that

that many parents do these things no otherwise than the brute beasts feed and protect their young by natural instinct and affection is manifest, because, if the command of God did prevail with them, it would also make them conscientiously industrious in discharging their duty to their souls, which God hath strictly enjoined. But how miserably do they neglect them, in this their most important interest? They too often neither bestow any pains upon them, to instruct them in the principles of religion, and their duty to God, nor use any effectual means for preventing and restraining sin in them. Nor is this the only evidence of their performing no part of their duty to them in obedience to God; for if they did, then would the same command and authority of God

also engage them to reform their own lives ; then would they not, as many of them do, allow themselves in sinful ways, slighting God's authority, and casting his word behind their back. The same likewise may be said of children. I speak of children, grown up to years of some discretion, and able to put a difference between good and evil. They obey their parents (some of them I mean, though many others are undutiful, headstrong, and rebellious) I say, the better sort of children obey their parents, are unwilling to offend them, or incur their displeasure ; but yet it is not the command of God that sways them, or prevails with them ; it is because they stand in some awe of their parents, but not because they stand in awe of God, who hath threatened to punish stubborn and disobedient

dient children, and hath promised to reward such of them as are dutiful and obedient, as is implied in the motive annexed to the fifth commandment. It is because of their dependance on them, because they live in expectation of further kindneses from them; but not with respect to God's commandment, who hath said, *Honour thy father and thy mother, and Children obey your parents, for this is well pleasing unto God.* This consideration, that it is well pleasing unto God, hath not the least influence upon that obedience which many children yield to their parents, nor are they at all moved by this to the performance of their duty to them.

Thus have I shewn in these few instances, to which many more might

be added, that though men may do many good things, yet very little of what they do, may, upon examination, appear to have been done faithfully; so far are they from being capable of the testimony and commendation given to Gaius, to whom the apostle saith, *Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest, both to the brethren and to strangers.*

What I shall further add by way of application, shall be to shew how this faithfulness may be known, and how it may be attained. A man then may know himself to be faithful,

First. If he be universally conscientious. Faithfulness will cause a man to have respect to his whole duty, to all God's commandments, If any known

known duty be willingly and constantly neglected, it is a strong argument that little else is done faithfully, or, at least, so faithfully as it ought to have been done. For those principles which would engage a man to faithfulness in one thing, would also do it in all other things. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in the greatest; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in the greatest. Upon this ground it is that St. James saith, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all*: the reason whereof he adds in the next verse; because the same authority of God is despised and violated in the breach of any one law, which should prevail with us to yield obedience to all. He who cares so little for God's authority, as, notwithstanding, to venture on sin

in one thing, would do it in other things, if there were the like opportunity and temptation offered. Wherefore, God, who sees the inward frame of his heart, and how it stands affected, looks upon him as guilty of the breach of the whole law in effect,

If you have a sight of your unfaithfulness; and if, moreover, you heartily bewail it, and sincerely mourn over it; if you discern how apt you are to have unworthy and worldly ends in your best actions; to have your eyes on man more than on God; to seek yourself, your own advantage, credit, reputation, more than God's honour; if, furthermore, these things be grievous and burthensome to you; if you be humbled for them, if you hate them, if you constantly pray against them, and vigorously strive
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against them : if it be thus with you, it is hence manifest that you would be faithful, and consequently that God mercifully looks upon you as faithful; and through the intercession of his Son, will, for his sake, accordingly treat you, and deal with you. But it is much to be feared, that there is little or no faithfulness where there is no discerning of a man's unfaithfulness, no bewailing it, or striving against its power. It is a sign that there is little or no faith where there is not a sight, and a sense, of the weakness of a man's faith, and of his unbelief; and consequently where there is no striving, no serious endeavours to subdue the remainders of a man's unbelief, and to strengthen his faith.

3dly. You may warrantably conclude, that you are in some measure faithful unto God, in managing the services in which his Providence engageth you; if, when you have done your duty, in some weak measure, as you are able, nothing else can satisfy you but God's acceptance of your actions. Is acceptation with men, good repute, commendation, and applause from the world, nothing to you, unless God be pleased to discover his acceptance of you? Are you restless and unsatisfied, unless he be pleased some way or other to let you know that he is well pleased with what you have done? Doth his acceptance quiet your mind, and satisfy your soul, whatever men judge of you; yea, though all the world should dislike and censure your actions? This is a
great

great argument, and a solid ground of satisfaction to you, that your aim was to please God, and to approve yourself to him; that you did what you did sincerely and faithfully as unto him, and not unto men.—But if men's acceptance of you, if their good thoughts of you, and good words do satisfy you, and you look no further; if, having this, you are quiet and at rest; you have great cause to suspect yourself, or rather to conclude against yourself, that you have what you aimed at, and that your main design was to please men, rather than God. Had your chief aim and desire been to please God, and to be accepted of him, nothing else besides his acceptance would have satisfied you.

Lastly.

Lastly. If it be asked, how we may attain to do every thing faithfully; I answer,

You must watch your heart in all things to which you apply yourself, and observe the inward principles and motives of all your actions. Though you know the things which you do to be lawful, and to be, perhaps, not only lawful, but your duty; and though there be in you, general intentions to do every thing faithfully, yet such is the corruption of your heart, that you will find it often interpose and mingle itself with your best actions, vitiating them, by putting you upon them from undue motives, and to base and unworthy ends. Wherefore, besides your general resolutions to endeavour in all things to act faithfully,
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it will be of great concernment to you, that you often put the question to your soul, and ask yourself, What is my present end or design? What is my determining motive? If we frequently thus reflected on ourselves, and examined the principles of our words and actions, as we should thereby often discover the falseness of our hearts, and our unfaithfulness in what we do; so it would be a powerful means to make us faithful, and to preserve us from those undue and sinister motives, those unworthy ends, which too often prevail in us, and have too great an influence upon our actions.

To conclude; let us remember always, that it is our great interest to do every thing faithfully, because otherwise all that we do is lost, and unworthy

thy of reward. It is the grossest deceit to expect that God should reward you for that service, which was not intended to be done for him, but for yourself, or for some other master? It is plain that service, in which his glory was not intended, but your own reputation and advantage, or your worldly interest, is no service to him. When the Scribes and Pharisees were vain-glorious and hypocritical in their designs, praying and giving alms only to be seen of men, Christ said of them, *They have their reward.* In like manner, those who seek only praise and commendation from men, have what they sought after. Men may applaud them, and speak well of them, and that is all the reward for which they must look. From God they must expect no reward, whom they never intended

tended to please, or honour by their service; but, like the Scribes and Pharisees, whom they resemble, whatever may be their reward on earth, be forever excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

attributed to the state of honour by their
ancestors; but the state of the
nation, which they regarded, whether
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S E R M O N X I X .

EPHESIANS V. 2.

*And walk in love, as Christ also hath
loved us.*

THE principal ingredients in a good and excellent character are, piety towards God, and charity and benevolence towards mankind; and of both these our Lord Jesus Christ hath exhibited to us a most perfect example. The latter is what I shall now consider. St. Paul in the text, exhorting christians to walk in love, very properly urges the example of Christ,

Christ, as a motive which should have a great influence to engage them to its practice: *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.* He gave many signal proofs of his disinterested benevolence and loving kindness towards mankind, through the course of his sacred life, but especially in its last concluding scene, when *he gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling savour.* Accordingly, when our Saviour layeth it as his special commandment upon his disciples, that they should love one another, he proposeth his own love to them, as furnishing both the most engaging motive to mutual benevolence, and the most amiable and perfect pattern of this virtue. *This is my commandment, (saith he) that ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

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The instances of Christ's benevolence, and love towards mankind are so many, that it is not easy to make a distinct enumeration of them.

His benevolent disposition appeared in the admirable precepts of love that dropped from his lips: when he summed up the whole law it was in love, in love to God, and love to our neighbour; and by our neighbour he hath taught us to understand, not merely those of the same city, nation, or religion with ourselves, but all mankind, so as to be ready to do them good, as far as we have ability and opportunity. Not only hath he forbidden the "rendering evil for evil," but he hath commanded us to "render good for evil," to "love our enemies," to "bless them that curse us,

and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us," which is carrying benevolence to the noblest height.—His own temper and practice also was every way answerable to the excellence of his doctrine. Not only was he far from injuring or wronging any man, or doing the least act of injustice or violence, but *he went about doing good*, as St. Peter assures us. His life was one constant series of the most beneficent acts of goodness to the bodies and souls of men. The design of his coming was as he himself representeth it, *to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.* He condescended to converse with

with the poorest, the meanest, and even with those who were called publicans and sinners, that he might have an opportunity of instructing them, and bringing them to a sincere repentance. As the great heavenly physician, he went about among them to heal their distempered souls. Far was he from discouraging any beginnings and tendencies towards good; he did not *break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*. What wonderful love and pity breathe in that most gracious invitation, so worthy of the Saviour of mankind, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.*

St. Matthew, after giving an account of Christ's going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and healing their diseases, observes that, when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion (the bowels within him yearned over them, as the word in the original signifies) because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he to his disciples, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Not only on this, but on several other occasions also, we read of his being moved with compassion. Thus we are told in the fourteenth chapter of St. Matthew, that Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with com-

passion

passion towards them, and healed their sick : and, as St. Mark tells us, in the parallel passage, he began to teach them many things.

Indeed, all his miracles in general, were acts of godlike benevolence as well as power. He healed the most desperate diseases, cleansed the lepers, caused the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and as St. Peter expresses himself, *healed all those that were oppressed of the devil.* None ever applied to him for assistance and relief, who went away unheard or unanswered from his presence. He seemed, indeed, at first, to reject the request of the Syrophœnician woman, who would have had him come, and heal her daughter ; but it appeared, in the issue, that this was

only to quicken her application, with a view to render her faith, as well as his mercy, more illustrious.

When the Samaritans, in a certain village, refused to receive and entertain him; and two of his disciples, out of a just regard, as they thought, for the honour of their Lord and master, and a zeal against such hereticks and unbelievers, as they esteemed the Samaritans to be, desired that he would allow them to command fire from heaven to come down and consume them, even as Elias did; he gave a remarkable proof of the great goodness and tenderness of his mind, in the answer he returned to them. We are told that he turned, and rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

Besides

Besides this general love and goodness which he exercised to all, he shewed the tenderness of his heart, by a most pure friendship towards those with whom he cultivated special intimacy. Who, that hath any generous feelings in his own breast, can, without emotion, read the account given us of his conduct, with regard to Lazarus? First, there was a message sent to him in these moving terms, *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* When, two days after, he acquainted his disciples with Lazarus's death, he did it in a manner that plainly shewed the tender friendship he bore him: *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.* When, afterwards, he was brought to the grave of Lazarus, and saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping

that came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and soon after his concern expressed itself by his tears; for, we are told, that *Jesus wept*: upon observing which the Jews could not help saying, *Behold, how he loved him!* There was one of the twelve, who was described by this character, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved; that is, for whom he had a special affection and friendship, namely, the apostle St. John. Indeed, he appears to have well deserved his master's love, as he was of a most amiable disposition, whose soul overflowed with love to God and mankind; of which we have manifest proofs in his excellent epistles. But our Saviour's friendship was not confined to him; he shewed a wonderful love to all his disciples. This appeared
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in his whole conduct towards them, through the course of his personal ministry ; but, especially, in that pure affection and friendship towards them, which appears in his excellent valedictory discourses, a little before his last sufferings ! What wonderful expressions are the following : *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you, continue ye in my love.* Again, *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you ; greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Of this friendship, he himself gave the most finished example ; so that one may justly wonder, that any should pretend they can find no such thing as friendship in the gospel, when it is so effectually recommended by the precepts and example of the Holy Jesus. What a tender concern

concern doth he shew for his disciples, when they were grieved at the thoughts of his departure from them ! What excellent instructions doth he give them, what encouraging and reviving promises ! Never was there united so much dignity and tenderness, as in the prayer he offered up when he was entering on his last sufferings and death. In what affectionate strains doth he recommend them to his Heavenly Father ! *Now, I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come unto thee : Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. Whilst I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name. And now come I unto thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I*
pray

pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. And he concludes with saying, I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love, wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

After he had finished this his prayer, when the Jews came with an armed force to apprehend him, his tender
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care for his disciples still shewed itself in those distressful circumstances. Having asked those who came to seize him, *Whom seek ye?* When they said, *Jesus of Nazareth;* he answered, *I have told you that I am he. If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way.*

Our Saviour's conduct towards Peter deserves special notice: he knew that he would deny him, yet he did not, for that reason, resolve to cast him off, but kindly admonished him of his approaching fall. What an inviolable friendship to him, what tenderness breathes in those expressions, *Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.* After Peter had actually denied him, and repeated the denial with an oath,

oath, what a look did he cast towards him, not full of wrath and severity to drive him into despair, but a look of compassion and gentle reproof, accompanied with a Divine Power, which immediately melted his soul into penitential sorrow ! We are told, that *the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter ; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice ; and Peter went out and wept bitterly.* Nay, to shew that he still retained his friendly disposition towards Peter, he condescended to a kind and particular notice of him, after his Resurrection, when he no doubt was much dejected and afflicted by the consciousness of his former ungrateful and unworthy conduct. It was in conformity to our Lord's will, that the angel said to

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the woman that came early to the sepulchre, *Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall you see him as he said unto you.* He himself appeared unto Peter the first of any of the apostles: *He was seen* (saith St. Paul) *of Cephas, that is, of Peter, then of the twelve.*

We do not find that he upbraided him with his conduct after his Resurrection, but in the most gentle manner put him in mind of his threefold denial, without expressly mentioning it to him, by asking him thrice, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* And thrice repeating the charge to him, *Feed my sheep.*

But that which above all deserves to be considered, and which is frequently

frequently insisted upon in the sacred writings as the most wonderful instance of his benevolence and love to mankind, as well as of obedience to his heavenly Father, is, that he submitted to all those grievous sufferings, and to a cruel and ignominious death for this end, that he might offer himself a sacrifice for sinful men, and might obtain eternal redemption for them. The apostle St. Paul in the text, lays a particular stress upon this, when, after having said, *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; he adds, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour.* To this our Lord Jesus Christ himself refers, when he said, that he would give his flesh for the life of the world. That he came to give his life a ransom, or price of redemption, for
many.

many. That his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. Agreeable to this are those declarations of the apostle, that Christ gave his life a ransom for many. That he died for all, when all were dead, that is, dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of condemnation. The greatness of the Divine love, as appearing in this instance, is excellently represented in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He loved me, saith St. Paul, and gave himself for me. The manner of expression shews, that

that the surrendering himself up to such grievous sufferings was Christ's own act and deed, not only in obedience to his heavenly Father's will; who would never have forced it upon him without his own consent, but from a principle of the most free and generous benevolence towards mankind. It is on this account especially that the apostle represents the love of Christ towards us, as a *love that passeth knowledge*. What an astonishing love doth it shew, that so glorious a person, the Son of God incarnate, the Divine Emmanuel, should, for us men, and our salvation, submit to such a series of unequalled humiliations and sufferings, as were beyond imagination great and grievous ! That he should consent to be *made sin for us* (as St. Paul most emphatically expresses it) *who*

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, should condescend to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of God's violated law, and to suffer for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This was an instance of love beyond all parallel, and which no words can sufficiently express. It is the wonder of angels, and will be the subject of everlasting praises and acknowledgments among the blessed in heaven.

The several things which have been mentioned plainly shew, that Christ hath exhibited the most illustrious and shining example of disinterested love, compassion, and benevolence towards mankind, that ever the world saw: but I would farther observe, that there
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is another instance of virtuous benevolence, which hath not been yet distinctly mentioned, and which deserves to be taken notice of in our Saviour's character, and that is the special love and affection he bore to his country, which, when it is in a due subordination to an universal love and benevolence towards mankind, is an excellent disposition of mind. As it was of the Israelites, that, *according to the flesh, Christ came*; so he all along manifested the heartiest concern for their welfare. During the course of his personal ministry, he applied himself in a particular manner to recover *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*: to them were the first offers of the gospel salvation made: *He came to his own, those of his own country and nation, but his own received him not.* Though

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he well knew the unjust, the cruel and ignominious treatment he was to receive from them, yet the view he had of their impending misery and desolation, which they brought upon themselves by their own wickedness, made the deepest impression upon his tender and benevolent heart: his concern vented itself by his tears. At his last coming to Jerusalem, which was but a few days before his Passion, he seemed to be more affected with the prospect of the ruin that was coming upon the Jews, than with his own approaching sufferings. We are told, that *when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, uttering this pathetic lamentation, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall*

shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. Before this also, he had expressed his tender concern for the Jews in the most affecting manner. Who can, without being sensibly touched, hear him thus expostulating, from an heart grieved for their obstinacy and approaching miseries! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? Behold your house is left unto you desolate; and he repeated

this again when he came to Jerusalem, a little before his last suffering.

Upon the whole, never was there any thing so amiable, so compassionate, as our Saviour's character; the more we consider it, the more we shall find reason to admire its unequalled excellence. Let us then admire, and imitate, till we be transformed into his amiable likeness. Here we may see divine love in a human form, living and conversing among men, displaying itself in a thousand kind offices and acts of beneficent goodness; and shall we not feel its sacred and powerful influence? If professed christians were but duly careful to resemble their great Lord and master in his goodness and benevolence, what honour would it reflect upon their profession!

profession ! And how happy would this earth become, by a conduct which would render it truly a type of heaven ! Those are certainly unworthy of the name of christians, who do not exercise themselves in well-doing after the example of their Lord ; how much more then those who are implacable, unmerciful, filled with bitter envying, malice, and revenge. How can such persons pretend to have the spirit of Christ dwelling in them, which is a spirit of love, peace, and charity ? Let us therefore, as we would approve ourselves the followers of Jesus, be *kind and tender-hearted, ready to forgive. Let us put on bowels of mercy, and that charity which is the bond of perfectness.* Our benevolence, like his, should be active and universal : we should be ready, as far as we have ability and

opportunity, to do good unto all men, to their bodies and to their souls, not excepting even our enemies themselves : but especially, we should love our christian brethren with a pure heart fervently, and those most in whom we see most of Christ's amiable image and resemblance, endeavouring to cultivate with them the intimacies of an holy friendship, On this he himself particularly insists, as the true and genuine proof of our being his disciples. *A new commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

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SERMON XX.

ACTS xxvi. 28, 29.

(Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. > And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.)

THESE words contain the answer of St. Paul to King Agrippa, when (being a prisoner) he was brought before him, (Festus the governor, and a great assembly of people,

people,)to give an account of his behaviour, (which the Jews thought very criminal;) and of the opinions he taught, (which appeared to them absolutely contradictory to the laws they had received from heaven.)

• (Wherefore, the great apostle) *He is the* having liberty allowed him to speak, ^{le} proceeded to prove manifestly from the books of Moses, and all the prophets, that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, whom God had in all times promised to send into the world, to redeem mankind. *that*

✱ By a strong argument taken from the uncontrollable and almighty power of God, he also made the resurrection of the bodies of men look so very credible, that Agrippa with much frankness *appears*

frankness and honesty declared, *he had almost persuaded him to be a christian.*

To these words of King Agrippa, St. Paul boldly made reply, *I would to God that not only thou, but also all that bear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

Such was

The occasion of the text (being thus explained) I propose from thence to employ the present opportunity in vindicating the pure and holy religion which St. Paul here openly professes, against those men who either from principle or passion, from errors in speculation, or practice, labour exceedingly to bring into contempt. *shall be my*

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permitted
For this end I propose to lay before you several instances and particulars, which manifest the truth and excellence of the gospel, and evidently shew how far it surpasses all other systems of religion.

1st. It gives a truer and fuller account of the nature and attributes of God.

2dly. A better and more certain relation of the creation of the world, declaring God to be the Author of our beings, and that we depend upon his providence for our preservation.

3dly. It shews wherein that worship and service truly consists, which will be most pleasing to God, and sets forth the means, and lays down the necessary

necessary rules of attaining to eternal happiness.

4thly. To encourage men to the reformation of their lives, it gives them unquestionable assurance, that God will be pleased graciously to pardon all finners, who sincerely repent, and accept of the satisfaction made by his own dearly beloved Son, for the greatest sins.

5thly. It promises higher help and assistance to men in performing the several branches and parts of their religious duty.

6thly. It discovers a clearer and more certain account of the immortality of the soul, and of the rewards and punishments in the world to come.

First.

First. The Christian religion gives a truer and fuller account of the nature and attributes of God.)

It cannot be doubted, but that from the order of the world, the admirable frame and composition of all the creatures ^{which inhabit} therein, their mutual service and assistance to each other, together with the exquisite harmony and agreeableness amongst them all, the existence of the supreme living God may be ^{clearly} demonstrated.

It is likewise evident, that many of the philosophers had, in a good measure, right notions of God, and sometimes express themselves as if their minds had been enlightened by divine Revelation, but at other times they are inconsistent with themselves. When they

they are discoursing of the original cause of things, the proofs they produce are weak and inconclusive; and there may be observed in their arguments much uncertainty, scruples, and diffidence. Be the case, however, as it will, with a few of the most enlightened among them in this respect, (the generality of the people were doubtless wretchedly sunk into polytheism and idolatry.)

By far the greater number not only erred in believing there were many Gods, but imputed such weakness and defects to them, and rendered to them such absurd worship, as was altogether repugnant to the perfections of the Deity, and inconsistent with the reason of men.

Among the Gods who were supposed to have wisdom and power, these qualities were restrained to so narrow a compass, as made it necessary there should be a multitude of them; some were to govern in heaven, others to rule on earth; some took care of the health, and relieved the infirmities of the body; others ordered the affairs of war and peace; and some presided over the fruits of the earth, providing due degrees of heat and moisture to bring them to maturity.

Indeed there was hardly any thing of moment or consequence to the life of man, which had not a peculiar God to preside over it, and direct its effects. Nay, so gross was the ignorance, so great was the stupidity of lapsed mankind, that almost whole nations adored

adored things void of understanding and sense; things, so far from having any character of divinity about them, that they were of too abject a nature to pretend to any of the marks of human reason.

Had they conceived a right apprehension of the boundless and immense perfections of God, as taught in the holy scriptures, they must have soon seen that their notion of a multitude of Gods, and of their various worship, was not only unnecessary, but impossible and repugnant to itself. They must have believed, that infinite wisdom and power could as easily and compleatly order, and take care of the whole mass and collection of creatures in all the universe, as of any single being therein.

Yet so rooted were their errors, that nothing was sufficient to obliterate, and wholly rase out of the souls of men, opinions so false, so foolish, so unworthy of the glorious attributes of God, and so dissonant to the nature of true religion, but an extraordinary revelation published by the miraculous power of God. ~~¶~~ Indeed, it is manifest and visible, that wherever the light of the gospel has shined, it has made some reformation, even among those who have not thoroughly embraced it; it has tinctured and heightened the writings of the greatest philosophers, upon the most important subjects.

The scriptures, and the scriptures only, always speak consistently of God. They ever declare him to be but one, eternal,

eternal, omnipresent, unchangeable Being; most holy and wise, most true and faithful, patient, long suffering, full of tenderness and compassion, infinitely good, merciful, and gracious.

These are the doctrines always laid down in the inspired writings concerning God; these are the doctrines, which will make those entirely happy who believe them; inasmuch as they direct us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves. Nevertheless, modern unbelievers, who pride themselves in freedom of thought, are pleased, according to their usual gaiety, to insinuate, that the worshippers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the stupid idolaters of the heathen world, are upon the same level; and that their idolatry and the

christian religion have equal pretensions to truth,

Let those persons, if they have not rooted up all religion and virtue from their hearts, consider, that by this prophane mockery, *they blaspheme the Lord who bought them with his own blood; they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Let them remember, that *if they sin wilfully, after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there then remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* Let them also remember, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,*

If

(~~F~~) If men will thus use their wit in the defiance of the Almighty, and in the contempt of his Providence, which should have been employed in magnifying and praising his marvellous power and immense goodness, displayed in the glory of his wondrous works; they will find in the conclusion, their pretended wit to have been but the offspring of folly, and will change their present irreverent mockery for the anguish of confusion and despair. ~~7~~)

But to proceed: The divine attributes of goodness, forbearance, and mercy, are little observed, insisted on, and explained in the best heathen writers. In them you may find large descriptions of God's natural attributes, and of the power with which

he strikes terror into the hearts of men ; but not much notice is taken of his moral attributes, his mercy and paternal love, his affection and care over all his creatures ; which, as they are the principal objects of the christian's devotion in his family and closet, so are they the chief subjects of the public offices of the christian church, when men assemble together to adore God, and set forth his praises in the great congregation.

It is on the wise and good providence of God, that christians rely for the provision of their daily bread. This is their rock of defence against all their enemies ; this is their sure refuge in times of trouble, sickness, and distress ; this is their firm support, when all human support fails,

at

at their last hour, at the approach of death. It is the unmerited grace and love of God, on which only they rely for the pardon of their sins, and acceptance and justification at the great tribunal of our blessed Lord and Saviour. *Great therefore, justly exclaims the Psalmist, great is the Lord, and marvellous; there is no end of his greatness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, long suffering, and of great goodness: The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works.*

All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints give thanks to thee: they shew the glory of thy kingdom, that thy power, thy glory, and mightiness of thy kingdom might be known unto men. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgressions?

R 4

Secondly.

Again, Secondly. In revealed religion, we have a clearer and more certain account of the creation of the world. God is there declared to have made all the beings which exist by his mighty power; to have disposed them in so excellent an order by his infinite wisdom; to have made them so beneficial to each other, by his boundless goodness; and to continue and preserve them in this happy condition by his watchful and all-seeing Providence.

The gentile philosophers were much at a loss to explain the creation of the world, notwithstanding they had learned some hints from the Jewish scriptures, concerning the production of the universe, and the general flood. There seems, at least, to have been no settled opinion, in which any considerable number of them could agree.

Some believed the eternity of the world ; others thought this vast system of beings was caused by the elemental parts of pre-existing matter falling and joining together, by naked undiscerning chance, without the interposition of any wise director to guide and unite them.

(Now, the first of these opinions excludes God out of the world, and the other makes him useless in it. For, if the world be eternal, and without a Maker, it must be self-existent ; but what is self-existent must be absolutely perfect, and so can have no dependance upon any external cause.

So likewise if the world was framed by chance, without the power and wisdom of God, and continues without his

his care and protection, then the inhabitants thereof lie under no obligation to fear, worship, and obey him, nor have any reason to give him an account of the conduct of their lives.

But is it possible with any strength of reason to maintain, that a world continually changing, altering, and decaying, should be immutable, independent, and eternal?

There is nothing you can consider, which will not carry you to the first cause. If none of the men of this time have their existence from themselves, neither had the men who lived in the age before them, but we must ascend upwards from generation to generation, unto the first Author of our being; neither could the first men
be

be self-existent, for what is self-existent, is independent, and must abide for ever. Nor is the second opinion more defensible. Can any thing be more absurd and unaccountable than the assertion, that a world full of order, design, proportion, and accurate contrivance, should start up by mere accident and chance?

The relation of the original of things in the holy scriptures, on the contrary, always agrees entirely with the nature and attributes of God, and the state and condition of the world. In them it is perpetually declared, with authority, that there is but one supreme, independent, self-existing, Almighty Being; and that all other things do proceed only from him, and must of necessity depend upon him for
their

their subsistence. Indeed, it is demonstrable, from clear and plain reason, as well as published by divine authority, that the supposition of two omnipotent, omnipresent, self-existing, independent beings, absolutely implies a contradiction; and that all the parts of the universe carry unquestionable evidence with them of their being the productions of uncircumscribed goodness, wisdom, and power. (For, although the wisest philosophers of the heathen world, always spoke doubtfully and darkly of these great truths; yet, the inspired penmen, from the beginning of the Holy Bible to the end of it, do write with certainty and clearness concerning the creation. They not only ascribe and attribute it constantly and solely to God, but set forth the order and manner in which

volume

which the creation was completed.

(What is plainly and historically related by some of them, concerning the original of the world, is elegantly and loftily expressed by others in hymns of praise. *He stretched forth the heavens alone, he spread abroad the earth by himself; he compasseth the water by bounds; he made man in his image, and gave him dominion over other creatures. Who decketh thyself with light as with a garment; who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,*

Who, indeed, could discourse with so much truth of God, and in so lively a manner express the excellence of his works, and relate the particular progress of his proceeding, in producing the creatures out of nothing,

as

as those persons to whom he miraculously revealed it, and who were instructed and assisted in what they wrote by his own most holy spirit.

The same remark holds good with respect to the moral government of the Almighty. While the wise men among the heathens make a very defective representation of divine Providence, so defective, that upon it no hearty reliance in the course of life, could possibly be established; Moses and the prophets, but above all, our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, give us the most comfortable and satisfactory assurance, that the providence of God extends itself with the greatest benignity to all the creatures it has brought into existence. They teach us, that as beings of the highest

highest rank, and the largest portions of power and ability, cannot continue to subsist without his gracious influence to preserve them, so likewise he never fails to take the least under his protection. As the most powerful and considerable creatures have their dependance upon his favour, so the weakest and most minute shall never perish for the want of his care. He provideth even for the animal and vegetable creation, for the sparrows and the lilies of the field.

But his providence is more particularly employed about man, whom he created after his own image; and still in more especial manner, and above all, it engages itself for the preservation of the holy, the humble, the meek, the merciful, the charitable, who firmly believe

believe in God, who serve him faithfully, who sincerely rely on his promises, and endeavour to be most useful to all their fellow creatures. In favour of such, it so orders all events, that they shall work together for their advantage and comfort.

Again, Thirdly. Revelation discovers to us, wherein the true worship of God consists, and shews us how we may serve him acceptably. It clears religion from the superstitious fears, which intimidate and enslave the minds of men; it entirely prohibits all immorality and injustice, which sink men down to the low condition of beasts which perish, and destroy the foundations of their living together in society. It lays down all the necessary means to acquire firm and durable happiness; it strictly enjoins

joins purity, sobriety, meekness, patience, industry, mercy, and universal benevolence; virtues which exalt our souls, and make their nature more heavenly and divine.

As we before acknowledged, that many of the antient philosophers had some faint notions of the existence and attributes of one supreme God, so we now grant that many of them have given wise precepts concerning moral virtues. But in divers respects these learned men, and their philosophical performances, have fallen short of our Blessed Saviour, and his admirable religion. The christian religion is perfect, and without faults; and the most holy, and innocent life of Christ, came up to the perfection of his religion. He never commanded his dis-

ciples and followers to do any duty, which he had not exactly performed himself; whereas the philosophers of the highest reputation had mingled many errors with their true doctrines, and were guilty of great failings in their conversation, which was the occasion chiefly, why their doctrines were not so generally received, and why they had no more efficacy in enlightening and amending the world. For by thus joining to their sound and wholesome rules of morality, many false, weak, and unreasonable opinions, they unavoidably diminished their credit and authority, and caused their true and just principles to have less influence upon others. Thus the same persons who wrote so ably concerning honesty and temperance, condemned the passions as evil, and declared

clared it to be our duty utterly to extinguish them. Nevertheless, it is as impossible to destroy our passions as it is to remake our souls ; for, there is no rooting up those things which God has essentially interwoven with our nature.

Besides, the passions, contained within the bounds of moderation, exercised about proper objects, and well ordered, are of great advantage to us, for they put us upon the watch when temptations assault ; they guard our virtue, and protect our honour ; they raise a just indignation in us against all baseness, immorality, and prophane-ness ; they excite an hatred and abhorrence of injustice, oppression, impurity, and cruelty ; and preserve in our hearts an ardent zeal for the glory

of God, and an affectionate tenderness to all our fellow-creatures.)

But Another thing which discredits the authority of heathen writers is, that very few of them in their own lives, ever exemplified the virtuous principles and precepts they taught. Nay, it appears that many of the chief patrons and founders of their sects fell shamefully below the character they gave of a good man. Some of them were notorious for their exceeding covetousness; others, destitute of true patience to bear troubles, laid violent hands on themselves; and some died meanly and abjectly, and void of that philosophic resolution and fortitude, of which they pretended themselves to be so great masters. But above all, the pagan philosophers wanted the power

power of miracles, to convince unreasonable opposers that they received their doctrine from heaven.

On the contrary, whatever was defective in the Gentile writers, appeared compleat and perfect in our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave the highest authority to his doctrines and laws by numbers of undoubted miracles, never wrought to satisfy vanity and ostentation, or to procure any worldly advantage; but either to recover and purify men's souls from all ungodliness and iniquity, or to remove the infirmities and heal the diseases of their bodies.

As truth, equity, and goodness, shone forth in all his doctrines and commandments, so his life was ever

conformable to his righteous precepts. In a word, he was himself a compleat pattern of every virtue which he required of those who were baptized into his church. Neither was he more to be admired for the unblemished holiness of his conversation, than for his unparalleled patience, under the greatest injuries and sufferings, both in the abuses, indignities, and cruelties, which immediately preceded his death; while at his crucifixion itself, he discovered the most perfect example of piety and suffering virtue, that ever had been seen in the world.

He shewed the most admirable patience in his behaviour, through that whole scene of revilings and torments. Being led to slaughter, like a lamb he opened not his mouth; no
repining

repining at providence, no complaints against his murderers were heard to proceed from his lips : he, at the same time, shewed the exactest submission to the will of God, and manifested the highest charity to men. >

He not only pardoned his merciless and wicked destroyers, but prayed unto his Father to forgive their sin; and after he had desired that the will of God, and not his own will might be done, he meekly submitted to a death full of shame and agony.

To crown the whole, by rising on the third day from the dead, he hath given the strongest proof of the truth of his religion, and the firmest ground for good men to hope, that they also shall rise again from the dead,

which can be expected, or reasonably desired.

Wherefore, if unbelievers would divest themselves of their prejudices, and think freely, that is impartially; if they would use their reason in comparing things one with another, and equally consider their force and weight, they would be compelled to acquiesce in the heavenly doctrines and laws of Christ. They would be obliged to own that his pure and innocent life, his ready submission to the will of God in his death, his wonderful resurrection from the state of the dead, as he had foretold, upon the third day, and his miraculous ascension into heaven, are unquestionable demonstrations of his having been sent by God into the world, to reform and redeem the fallen posterity

posterity of Adam ; and would be convinced of the indispensable obligation upon us all, to receive him for our Saviour, and with all our hearts to believe in him, obey him, and depend upon him for our future happiness.

and does not

Fourthly. The gospel gives men more assurance that God will be pleased to pardon sin, to forgive all offenders who truly repent, and accept their sincere, though imperfect obedience, than can be found in any other system of religion.

(By the light of nature it is manifest, that God loves virtuous actions, and hates those which are evil ; for virtuous deeds carry always their advantage with them, and wickedness naturally produces trouble and calamity.

But

But though it be evident to all men, that God approves virtue, and abhorreth vice, yet it is not so manifest by natural light, that he will forgive sinners upon their repentance; and if it be granted that God's anger against offenders may be appeased, yet it does not appear that he will pardon all sins, nor what kinds and degrees of sin he will remit, nor what sort of satisfaction he will accept, nor what measure of repentance he requires in order to reconciliation.

As to these cases, nature is silent; men have light enough to perceive their infirmities, weaknesses, and miscarriages, but not sufficient knowledge to find out a remedy adapted to their situation and condition. For, notwithstanding pagan writers abound
with

with exhortations to virtue, with motives to be patient in sickness and troubles, and with persuasions against the fears of death, yet their arguments had not force and strength enough to support the spirits of men in their afflictions, and to arm them against the approaches of the king of terrors.

Nothing but the hope of being reconciled to God, and that he will forgive men their trespasses against him, and their fellow-creatures; nothing but a firm trust in his infinite goodness, and a steady belief, that after this life is ended, he will bestow upon them a glorious immortality, can make mankind bear patiently the evils and miseries of this state, and with a true courage meet the inevitable stroke of death.

Concerning

Concerning these arguments, the philosophers, who had only their unassisted reason to guide them, treat sparingly, defectively, and obscurely; while, on the contrary, the holy men, who in their writings had the assistance of the spirit of God, are full, and clear, and distinct in their discourses upon these important subjects; evermore displaying in the liveliest manner God's mercy towards penitent offenders, and his great readiness graciously to receive them into his favour. Thus we find in the scriptures, and the scriptures only, the welcome tidings, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that, When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and*
doth

doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; and that, though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, yet shall they be as wool. Therefore we are commanded to repent, and be converted, that our sins may be blotted out.

(It is easy to conceive, how it must replenish the hearts of men with comfort and joy, to have undoubted assurance from the holy spirit, that God is in perpetual readiness to pardon and mercifully receive sinners who repent, and believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and forsake their evil ways; to be assured that he will forgive the blackest and most heinous crimes, upon the sincere return and amendment of the
transf-

transgressors. Such assurance he has been pleased graciously to give us, and to declare, that the greatest sins are not beyond his mercy, nor the most profligate and wretched offenders too guilty to be objects of his pity and compassion.

Immanuel
This is so true, that the whole dispensation of the New Testament, is a kind and merciful contrivance of God for the remission of sins; Christ bringing a commission, with full powers from heaven, to grant pardon to the most flagrant offenders, who would unfeignedly repent, and believe his holy gospel. This glorious commission he sealed with his own blood upon the cross, and demonstrated the truth and validity of it by his resurrection. For thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and
to

to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.

As to the Gentiles, indeed, who had no knowledge of the pardon of sins revealed and promised in the gospel, our gracious Creator will doubtless judge them by that natural light he had discovered to them, and those helps he had furnished them with; we safely leave them therefore to the uncovenanted mercies, and to the immense goodness of God, which leads men to repentance, and in whose house are many mansions and degrees of happiness. Nevertheless it is most true, that the holy scriptures promise higher assistance to men, in the performance of these necessary duties of religion, which

which they have revealed unto them. They promise that the spirit of God will enlighten the minds, and give courage and resolution to the hearts of good men, in all difficulties and hazards. (There could not indeed be more dangerous, I had almost said more impious errors, than the two favourite tenets of the wisest pagan philosophers, that it is in the power of man to make himself compleatly happy, without the assistance of any other Being; and that the truly wise man is equal to God: nay, sometimes so arrogant and intolerable was their prophaneness, as to give him the precedence. Hence they were so far from soliciting the assistance of God, in the management of the affairs of life, or praying for his protection, that they thought themselves above his power, and were
equally

equally regardless of his favour or displeasure. It is, therefore, a constant instruction given to their wise man, not to fear death; but how is it possible for a man not to fear that which he believes will put an end to his being? The fears of death must be unavoidable and unconquerable, after all the aids and assistance of philosophy, to one who has no hopes he shall be brought to life again, and made happy in a future state.

The inspired writers, on the contrary, not only amply discover and set forth the fall, the weaknesses, and miseries of mankind, but convince us that we are restored to a better condition, not by our own strength and power, nor by the contrivance and operations of our own wisdom; but

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through,

through the mercy of God, obtained for us by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; who also, after he ascended into Heaven, sent the Holy Ghost to instruct, comfort, and enable us to fulfil the terms and conditions of the new covenant, which he had made with God on our behalf.

It is matter also of unspeakable joy, that this Holy Spirit is ever present, and ready to direct us, into all the truths of our religion requisite for us to know; and to endue us with fortitude, resolution, and abilities, to perform all the duties necessary to our salvation.

The

The assistance thus afforded us adapts itself to all the necessities and exigencies of our lives. When we are puzzled and perplexed with difficulties, it irradiates the darkness, dispels the clouds, and lets light into our souls to direct them; so that a truly sincere good man shall never err fundamentally; or if he do err, God will forgive him. When we are pressed hard with trials and temptations on account of our firm adherence to pure religion, the spirit of God inspires us with courage to encounter them, or with patience to bear them. He quickens our diligence, and excites our zeal, when we grow slack or negligent in the performance of those good works by which alone we can hope to obtain the happiness of the kingdom of heaven.

T 2

Lastly.

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the Scriptures*

Lastly. Of this heavenly kingdom, of the immortality of the soul, of the resurrection of the body, and of the rewards and punishments in the future life, we find in the Scriptures a more clear and ample discovery than was ever revealed elsewhere. There, and there alone, we find it expressly declared, that all men shall be brought to the judgment seat of God, to give an account of all the actions of their lives; that in order to this, the earth and the sea shall render up their dead; that the several parts of each man's body, however greatly altered and changed, how much soever scattered and dispersed, shall be re-collected together, and moulded into their former shape, and rejoined to the same soul. There, and there only, we are clearly assured, that all the nations of the world,

world, thus wonderfully raised from their graves, and by the holy angels gathered together, shall be placed before the throne of Jesus Christ their supreme judge, who, blessing the good, will order them to inherit the kingdom of heaven, prepared for them from the foundation of the world; but the wicked he will command to depart for ever from his presence, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Accordingly, it being a matter of the highest importance that we should not lose our hopes of immortality, and be deprived of the happiness of the kingdom of heaven, our blessed Lord commands us, that we should not be afraid of men who can only kill the body; but rather dread and

fear God, who can destroy both body and soul, and cast them into hell.— Surely it is impossible to frame an idea of more powerful motives to godliness, righteousness, justice, equity, meekness, humility, temperance, and every other christian virtue ; or greater dissuatives and discouragements from all kinds of vice, than these so awfully set before us in the New Testament. Here we are addressed by every motive which can alarm our fears, or excite our hopes. Here we are assured, that however great may be our difficulties and temptations, our reward shall be still greater ; that if we endure to the end, we shall be called the children of the Most High, and receive an unfading, an eternal crown of glory.

Thus,

Thus, then, it appears plain and evident, that neither religion, as it was compounded and corrupted by the fables and inventions of the poets; nor as it was patronized and enforced by the laws and decrees of the civil magistrate; nor as it was asserted and explained by the philosophers, can for truth and goodness bear any comparison with the religion and knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified.

Even those precepts of morality, and those rules of holy and virtuous living, which the Pagans did teach, it has been proved, beyond question, are more plainly and clearly delivered in the Scriptures, and enforced with greater authority.

To

To this we may add, that the love of God, and the love of our brother, the forgiveness of injuries, and the doing good to our enemies, are either new duties, or the old ones carried much higher than they ever were, till taught by our Saviour.

But above all let it be remembered, that no lawgiver before our Saviour ever presumed to controul the thoughts of men, because no human lawgiver or moralist could discern, direct, restrain, or have any power over them. It is the unrivalled glory of the christian revelation that its laws reach the heart. God there assures us he will reject all our worship and service which does not proceed from that source, and will severely punish all the evil devices and secret imaginations

tions which are formed there in opposition to his will, though we may never have the power to execute them : An instance of purity unknown and unimagined till revealed in the gospel, and worthy of that Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and chargeth even his angels with folly.)

What then remains, but that we conclude with hearty prayers, that we may walk worthy of our holy profession and high calling in Jesus Christ, and answer the great ends of his coming into the world.

~~that~~ ² May we diligently imitate the virtues of his life, and abhor the committing of the ~~the~~ sins, for the expiating of which, he submitted to a cruel and most ignominious death ! *infirm*

May

That May the consideration of his resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven, ^{may} strengthen our faith and hope of immortality; mortify and destroy in us all evil concupiscence, and raise our affections to things above, that in God's fit time a door may be opened for us to everlasting life!

That May the God of patience enable us to resist the most alluring temptations, and quietly to bear the greatest afflictions, rather than wound our consciences, and make a shipwreck of our faith!

5 JY 61

& Lastly that May the God of consolation ^{may} give us will and strength to endure all labours and weariness, in running to the end of our christian race; that having preserved our innocence and

4

purity

purity through the whole stage of our ~~and~~
 lives, at Christ's second coming, we
 may receive that crown of righteousness,
 laid up for all those who serve, fear,
 and honour him, and desire and love
 his appearing! *Grant this O Heavenly*

Intercession for this sake our only Saviour &c.

~~THE~~ F I N I S . ~~and~~

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